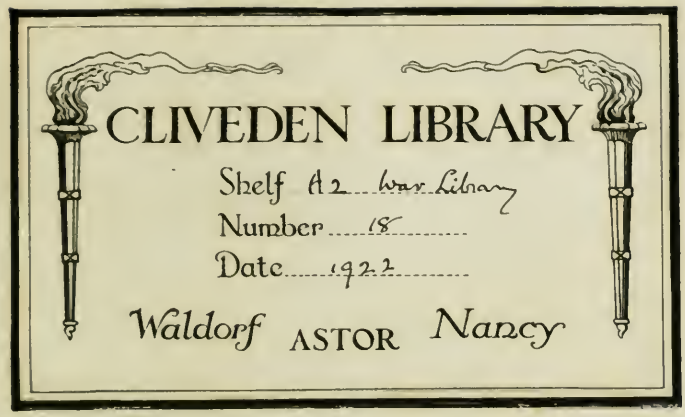
WITH OUR ARMY IN FLANDERS

G. VALENTINE WILLIAMS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WITH OUR ARMY IN FLANDERS

From the drawing by George Scott

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Silent Ypres.

WITH OUR ARMY IN FLANDERS

BY

G. VALENTINE WILLIAMS

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1915

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TO

THE BRITISH SOLDIER

PREFACE

In the words of the Chief of the Italian General Staff, the war correspondent is the link between that part of the nation that fights and that part which is watching—" a noble and fertile mission, as great as any mission ever was, and as necessary, too, for no army can long and resolutely march to victory if it has not the support and enthusiasm of the whole country behind it."

As the accredited correspondent of the *Daily Mail* at the General Headquarters of Field-Marshal Sir John French, I have spent the greater part of the past six months with the British Army in Flanders. I have seen for myself the life and work of our army in the field. I have visited in person the trenches along practically our whole front. I have talked with our organizers of victory from the Commander-in-Chief downwards to the man in the saphead ten yards from the enemy.

This book is the result. It was written in the field, under the Censorship. That familiar phrase, " Passed by Censor," stands at the foot of every chapter in the manuscript, as it will stand at the foot of this preface.

To that part of the nation which is watching at home I could, in fulfilment of my mission, have offered a more detailed narrative of the life of that other part that is fighting in Flanders, did not considerations of military necessity stand in the way. But, apart altogether from the question of patriotism, the large measure of trust which the army has, in most instances, extended to the writer has made me the more anxious to respect a privileged position, and to eschew anything calculated to afford to the enemy the least information of value. My endeavour has rather been to present a picture of the life of our army in Flanders built up out of a series of impressions, to reveal the soul of the army as it has been unbared to me in the actual conditions of warfare.

If I should not seem to paint war as terrible or our task in Flanders as stupendous as it is, you must set it down to the army's contagious habit of making the best of things. The army knows that, man for man, it is more than a match for the German. It knows that, given a lead, it can draw upon resources which, both physically and mentally, are better than anything the Germans have now remaining. With unconcealed impatience it looks to the Government at home to increase our machinery of war until, in this respect as well, we can claim superiority over our redoubtable and unscrupulous foe.

I have praised freely—and God knows there is enough to praise out here !—and if my criticism is

sparing, it is solely because military criticism in the mouth of an accredited war correspondent acquires a weight in the eyes of the enemy that gives it the value of direct information.

I am anxious to express my gratitude to the Editor of the *Daily Mail*, who has generously allowed me to reproduce some of the admirable photographs in my book, and to M. René Baschet, *Directeur-Gérant* of the very excellent French weekly, *L'Illustration*, for his courtesy in permitting me to reprint M. Georges Scott's striking sketch of "Silent Ypres."

G. VALENTINE WILLIAMS.

In the Field,
September, 1915.

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Mr. G. Valentine Williams.

WITH OUR ARMY IN FLANDERS

CHAPTER I

OF OUR ARMY IN THE FIELD

All wars present a series of contrasts. Is not war itself the greatest of all contrasts of life? The antithesis of Man at Peace and Man at War is one with which the poets and artists have familiarized mankind all through the ages. And so, though we are in the thirteenth month of the overwhelming change which this, the greatest of all wars, has wrought in our lives, I find, on sitting down to record my impressions of the life and work of the British Army in the field, that I am continually reverting to the perpetual, the confounding contrast between the world at peace and the world at war.

Never were contrasts so marked as in this war. To cast the mind back a twelvemonth is like looking back on one's early childhood. "This time last year! . . ." How often one hears the phrase out here, with recollections of last year's glorious, golden Ascot, of distant, half-forgotten strife about Ulster, of a far rumbling, as yet indistinctly heard, in the Balkans, where swift and sudden death was preparing for that sinister Prince whose passing plunged the world into war.

"This time last year . . ."—City men use the

phrase. *They* were then the top-hatted strap-hangers of Suburbia, their thoughts divided between their business, their families, their hobbies. *Then* the word *Territorial* might raise a laugh at a music-hall; on Saturday afternoons soldiering was a pleasant relief from the office grind, and in summer afforded a healthful open-air holiday. London was full of Germans. We all knew Germans, and in our insular way toadied to the big fry and ridiculed the small, holding our state of military unpreparedness to be the finest tribute to our pacific aims, and making fun of the German, his steadfastness of purpose, his strict national discipline, his thrift. We welcomed at our tables the vanguard of the German army of invasion, the charming, salaried spies of the Embassy who made their way everywhere in that loose-tongued, light-thinking cosmopolitan crowd that in London passes for society, and the humbler secret agents, the waiters who in the trenches in Flanders are now turning their knowledge of our tongue to profitable account. We had German clerks, nice, well-spoken, cheap—cheap labour covers a multitude of sins!—hard-working young fellows who lived in boarding-houses at Brondesbury or Lancaster Gate, according to their means, and who, over their port after Sunday dinner, exchanged assurances with the "*dummen Engländern*" of the mutual esteem entertained by England and Germany for each other.

"This time last year . . ."—Aldershot, its ugly barrack buildings standing out hard in the brilliant sunlight, went peacefully about its routine pursuits of war. Maybe the stray bullet that was destined to

put a premature end to the splendid career of General John Gough, best beloved of Aldershot Staff officers, had not yet been cast. The army officer went in mufti save in the intervals of duty; the general public had never heard of General Sam Browne and his famous belt. At the Curragh, still seething with the bubbles of the Ulster whirlpool which had swept John French from the War Office, the training went on as before. The machine-gun was still a weapon pre-eminently of experts, not common to the army at large, its paramount usefulness as an added strength to the forces not yet realized.

"This time last year . . ."—polo at Ranelagh, where neither of the immortal Grenfell twins, the Castor and Pollux of our glorious army, saw Black Care that sits behind the horseman, cricket at Lord's, throngs at Boulter's Lock, lunchings and dinings and dancings innumerable. . . .

"This time last year . . ."—joyful holidays at Blackpool, New Brighton, or the Isle of Man at hand for the workers of the north, the brief relaxation from the loom, the spindle, the mine, the shipyard. All the life of England, in fine, ran along in its accustomed groove. We made a great deal of money; we spent a great deal more; we played our games; we talked them to the exclusion of topics of vital national importance; we rocked ourselves with dreams of universal peace based on political cries, such as "Two keels to one," or the "pacific policy of the German Emperor." One of the leading pacificist societies was arranging a great international peace congress at Vienna.

All at once, in a few hours of a hot August night, with great crowds waiting breathlessly in Whitehall, with a mob surging and singing round Buckingham Palace, it was swept away. The old life stopped. The new life began. Slowly, haltingly, as is our wont, we realized we were at war, though the process of mobilization was hindered by such idiotic cries (never was a people so swayed by cries as the British !) as " Business as usual !" the contraption of the astute City man who would save what business there was to save at the expense of the army, a catchword that kept the able-bodied young man at the counter measuring out yards of ribbon when he should have been shouldering a rifle at the front. Business as usual, indeed, when nothing was as usual in the world, when the Hun was halfway through Belgium, blasting his path with Titan howitzers larger than any the Allies possessed, and with machine-guns which he elected and made to be the primary weapon of the war, firing villages as he went to light up his work of murder and rapine! Business as usual when our little Expeditionary Force had not even set foot on the ships destined to transport it to France !

" This time last year . . ."—the men who use the phrase to me are in the trenches now, Aldershot and Curragh regulars, City men in the famous London Territorial regiments, miners and factory hands and workers from all over the country, in the horse or foot or artillery or air corps or supply services. Every time I pass a regiment on the roads here, or meet one in the trenches, I find myself wondering what most of

them did in civil life, what they would look like in civilian clothes.

" All wars are abnormal " is a saying of Sir John French. Though the civilized world must now perforce accept as a normal state of things the organized slaying which is going on right across Europe and over a good part of the rest of the world, I for one cannot bring my mind to adapt itself to the spectacle of the British people in arms as I see it day by day on all sides of me in this narrow but all-important wedge of the allied battle-line, where the ultimate fate of the British Empire will be sealed. The mind boggles at almost every one of the great stream of fresh impressions which pour in upon it in an irresistible torrent every day, the sea of English faces surging down a white ribbon of Flemish road, the unfamiliar sound of our mother tongue in settings which you intuitively know demand the smooth flow of French, the plain wooden cross over a simple grave which, without realizing it, you automatically accept as containing the mortal remains of a man you loved or admired, or maybe even disliked, one who had made his name in England, not in this bloody business of war, but at the Bar or in politics or in the City, at polo or at golf or football.

No, war is not normal, as all nations, except the Germans, know. It is abnormal in the events it produces as in the passions and virtues it engenders. Particularly it is abnormal to the British, strangest of all peoples, quick at a bargain and keenly sensible, singularly lacking in intuition, absorbed in business, slow to move, slow to mistrust. now, after basking in

the sunshine of decades of peace (the Boer War hardly disturbed the national life of the country), saved only from the fate of Belgium by the ever-sounding sea that has stood so often between England and her enemies.

Yet, while following the fortunes of our army in the field, I have often found myself pondering the fact whether, after all, war is such an abnormal thing to this great host of ours, Britishers of all stamps and from every clime drawn to the fighting-line by the same high ideal. The world, I grant you, has never seen so many men of Britain arrayed for battle on their own or any other soil. Yet we were once a military nation. The whole history of these lands of Picardy and Flanders, where our army is now fighting, during the past six centuries proclaims it. Since the days of the third Edward to the present time Englishmen have fought at intervals in these richly cultivated fields. The bones of many a fair-haired, straight-backed bowman of England are crumbling beneath the smiling plains through which our trenches run in a long winding line.

The country is replete with souvenirs of our military past, of the Black Prince, of Henry V., of the Duke of York, of Marlborough. There are houses still standing in Ypres, despite German "frightfulness," which witnessed the burning of the suburbs of the ancient capital of Flanders by the English and the burghers of Ghent in 1383. Half an hour's motor drive from General Headquarters of our army in France will take you to the field of Agincourt, where, 500 years ago, King Harry and his archers struck a brave blow for England.

I went to the field of Agincourt. It was a pious

pilgrimage. As another son of England with England's fighting men in Picardy, I wanted to stretch forth a hand across that gulf of 500 years, and say to those stout English bowmen, who from their native shires followed their knights and squires across the sea, "It is well. We are carrying on. You may rest in peace." I wanted to tell them in their graves beneath the warm grass ablaze, as I saw it, with buttercups and daisies and the gentle speedwell, that theirs was a clean fight that had left no bitter memories, that the gentlemen of France who fought so valiantly at Agincourt are with us to-day in spirit as surely as their descendants are with us in the flesh; that, like the Dickons and Peterkins and Wats of Agincourt, our men in Picardy and Flanders are brave and steadfast and true till death.

A little grove of trees enclosing a great crucifix planted in a solid base of brick is the only memorial on the battlefield. On a slab of stone affixed to the plinth the inscription runs:

25 OCTOBER, 1415.

C'EST ICI QUE NOS VAILLANS GUERRIERS ONT SUCCOMBÉ. LEUR ESPÉRANCE EST PLEINE D'IMMORTALITÉ. LA PRIÈRE POUR LES MORTS AFIN QU'ILS SOIENT DÉLIVRÉS DE LA PEINE QU'ILS SUBISSENT POUR LEURS FAUTES EST UNE SAINTE ET SALUTAIRE PENSÉE. CETTE CROIX A ÉTÉ ÉRIGÉE PAR VICTOR MARIE LÉONARD MARQUIS DE TRAMECOURT ET MADAME ALINE MARIE CÉCILE DE TRAMECOURT, SON ÉPOUSE, À LA MÉMOIRE DE CEUX QUI AVEC LEURS ANCÊTRES ONT PÉRI DANS LA FATALE JOURNÉE D'AZINCOURT.

PRIEZ POUR EUX.

There were woods on either side of the battlefield, possibly occupying the site of the woods in which our archers of Agincourt waited for the French. But there was no visible means of following the course of the fight from the conformation of the ground. A friendly peasant who was passing, and who proved to be the holder of some of the land, vouchsafed the information that the curé knew all the details of the battle. But the curé was in church.

The slab at the foot of the crucifix—the Calvary, the peasants call it—was covered with inscriptions cut in the stone or written in pencil. The dates showed that almost every one had been written since the outbreak of the war. They were martial and inspiring in tone. Most of them were the work of French soldiers quartered in the neighbouring villages, and they had signed their names, with the surname first, in approved military style, followed by the number of regiment and company. "*Hommage à nos braves Alliés! Vive la France!*" ran one. "*Dieu protège la France!*" was another, with the more prosaic addition, "*Mort aux Boches!*" "*Vive Joffre! Vive l'armée!*" ran a third. It was signed "*Une petite Française.*" Though Agincourt and the brave men who died there are remembered, the feud it stood for is forgotten. "*C'est bien changé maintenant!*" said the peasant at my side. Not only did the inscriptions on the stone attest that: they were also the eloquent expression of the great national revival which has been incorrectly summarized in the phrase, "*The New France,*" but which is in reality only the reawakening of a nation that led the world until it suffered the

sordid pettiness of politics to carry it away from the true path of national greatness.

Maybe many of the bowmen sleeping under the green grass of Agincourt would recognize the speech of the army that is fighting in France to-day. Every accent, every burr and brogue, every intonation and inflexion, which one may meet with between Land's End and the Hebrides, between the Wash and the Bay of Galway, may be heard in the ranks of our great volunteer army, in its way unique amongst the armed hosts standing in the field.

Englishmen travel but little in their own country. I am no exception to the rule, though I can plead in excuse a long period of service abroad as a newspaper correspondent. But a morning spent among the troops of the great army which has sprung from our little Expeditionary Force is equivalent to a six weeks' tour of the British Isles. Going from regiment to regiment, you pass from county to county, with its characteristic speech, its colouring, its fetishes, its customs. At the end of my first day with the army, as long ago as last March, when reinforcements came very slowly, and a Territorial Division was a thing to take guests to see, "to write home about," as the saying goes (though in this case the Censor would probably intervene), I felt that I had seen the microcosm of Britain, this Empire so vast, so widespread, so heterogeneous, that its essence has never been distilled before.

One of the most fascinating things to me about our army in France are the variations of speech. I have sometimes closed my eyes when a battalion has been

marching past me on the road, and tried to guess, often with some measure of success, at the recruiting area of the regiment from the men's accents or from their tricks of speech.

Take the Scottish regiments, for instance. I have little acquaintance with the dialects of Scotland, but my ear has told me that the speech of almost every Scottish regiment, save such regiments as the Gordons and the Black Watch, that attract men from all over the United Kingdom, differs. I spent a most fascinating half-hour one morning with a handful of Glasgow newsboys serving in a famous Scottish regiment that wears the trews. Their speech was unmistakably the speech of the Glasgow streets, and their wits were as sharp as their bayonets. I told them they were newsboys, and newsboys they were, or of the same class, van-boys and the like. I visited the Cameron Highlanders—what was left of their Territorial battalion—after the second battle of Ypres, and heard, in the speech of Inverness-shire, their story of the battle. Many of them speak Gaelic. One of their officers confided to me that during the battle, requiring two men to go down to the rear, the wires being cut, to ascertain the whereabouts of the brigade headquarters, he selected two notorious deer poachers as likely to have their wits about them. How many poachers of the red deer of Sherwood or the New Forest were there not at Agincourt ?

Leaving the red tartan of the Camerons and getting back to the trews, I remember an afternoon spent with the shattered remnants of the Scottish Rifles, about 150 men all told led out of action at Neuve Chapelle by

a Second Lieutenant of Special Reserve. The Cameronians, which is the official title of the regiment, recruit in Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire, and their speech was, I presume, the speech of those parts, for it was an accent—a Scottish accent—different from any other I had heard from the other Scotsmen out here.

It is a gratifying task, this identification of dialects. I have heard two sappers " fra' Wigan " engaged in a lively argument with two privates (from Cork) of the Leinster Regiment, in whose trench the two gentlemen " fra' Wigan " were operating. A London cockney, say, from one of the innumerable battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, would have understood less of that conversation if it had been carried on in German, but only a little less. During the Battle of Ypres two privates of the Monmouthshire Regiment, who were talking Welsh, were pounced upon by two prowling Southerners from one of the Home Counties, and carried off to Brigade Headquarters as German spies. What with Welsh miners talking Welsh and Cameron Highlanders Gaelic, the broad speech of the Yorkshire *Geordies*, the homely burr of the 3rd Hussars and other regiments recruited in the West Country, the familiar twang of the cockneys, the rich brogue of the Irish regiments, the strong American intonation of the Canadians, a man out here begins to realize of what composite layers our race is formed.

Of that race our army in the field is the quintessence. The voluntary system may collect the scallywags, but it primarily attracts, in circumstances like those of to-day, that brand of Englishman who has

done everything worth doing in England's history "for conscience' sake." There was a theory freely ventilated at the front at one time to the effect that the first of the new armies raised by Lord Kitchener would not be of the same material, morally and physically, as the succeeding ones, owing to the fact that, on the outbreak of the war, many men flocked to the colours because they had lost their employment. The second and third armies, it is alleged, being principally composed of men who, having taken a few months to wind up their affairs, had joined alone from a high feeling of duty to their country, would be of a better stamp. This theory does not hold water. Everyone who has seen the men of the new armies at the front has been alike impressed by their fine physique, their magnificent military bearing, their smart, soldierly appearance. "They're all right" is the verdict. No body of troops in an army in the field wants higher praise than this.

Everybody who is anybody is at the front. Never was there such a place for meetings as Flanders. The Strand is not in it. My own experience is that of everybody else. One finds at the front men one has lost sight of for years, old friends who have dropped away in the hurry of existence, chance acquaintances of a Riviera *train de luxe*, men one has met in business, men who have measured one for clothes. Often I have heard my name sung out from the centre of a column of marching troops, and a figure has stepped out to the roadside who, after my mind has shredded it of the unfamiliar uniform, the deep brown sunburn, the set expression, has revealed itself as old Tubby

Somebody whom one had known at school, or Brown with whom one had played golf on those little links behind the Casino at Monte Carlo, or the manager of Messrs. Blank in the City.

Fortune, the fair goddess, has high jinks at the front. I wanted to find a relation of mine, a sergeant in a famous London regiment, and wrote to his people to get the number of his battalion and his company. When the reply came I discovered that the man I wanted was billeted not a hundred yards from me in the village, in which the War Correspondents' Headquarters were situated, where he had come with the shattered remnant of his battalion to rest after the terrible "gruelling" they sustained in the second battle of Ypres. At the front one constantly witnesses joyous reunions, brother meeting brother in the happy, hazardous encounter of two battalions on the road or in the trenches. The very first man I met on coming out to the front was a motor-car driver whose father had particularly asked me to look out for his boy. I discovered that he was the man appointed to drive me!

What is it that has knit this great and representative body of the British people into one splendid harmonious whole, capable of gallantry and tenderness such as Homer sang, of steadfast endurance which Leonidas in Elysian fields must contemplate smiling through tear-dimmed eyes? We know that there is a deep strain of idealism in our race, lying far below a granite-like surface of cynical indifference, of frigid reserve. But who should have suspected its existence in the crowd of underground strap-hangers

and tramway passengers, in the noonday throngs pouring out of the factories and workshops, in all that immense mass of workaday, civilian England from which our firing-line in France is now being fed? You cannot go among our soldiers in the field without becoming conscious of the fact that, beneath their unflagging high spirits, their absolute indifference to danger, their splendid tenacity, there burns an immense determination of purpose, an iron determination to set wrong right. For in the mind of the British soldier, who wastes no time over the subtleties of high politics, the world is wrong as long as the German is free to work his own sweet will in it.

Humour is probably the largest component part of the spirit of the British soldier, a paradoxical, phlegmatic sense of humour that comes out strongest when the danger is the most threatening. A Jack Johnson bursts close beside a British soldier who is lighting his pipe with one of those odious French sulphur matches. The shell blows a foul whiff of chemicals right across the man's face. "Oh dear! oh dear!" he exclaims with a perfectly genuine sigh, "these 'ere French matches will be the death o' me!" A reply which is equally characteristic of the state of mind of the British soldier who goes forth to war is that given by the irate driver of a Staff car to a sentry in the early days of the war. The sentry, in the dead of night, had levelled his rifle at the chauffeur because the car had not stopped instantly on challenge. The driver backed his car towards where the sentry was standing. "I'll 'ave a word with you, young feller," he said. "Allow me to inform you that this car can't be

stopped in less than twenty yards. If you go shoving that rifle of yours in people's faces someone will get shot before this war's over !"

There is a great strain of tenderness in the British soldier, a great readiness to serve. Hear him, on a wet night in the trenches, begrimed, red-eyed with fatigue, chilled to the bone, just about to lie down for a rest, offer to make his officer, tired as he is, " a drop of 'ot tea !" Watch him with German prisoners ! His attitude is paternal, patronizing, rather that of a friendly London policeman guiding homeward the errant footsteps of a drunkard. Under influence of nameless German atrocities of all descriptions the attitude of the British soldier in the fighting-line is becoming fierce and embittered. Nothing will induce him, however, to vent his spite on prisoners, though few Germans understand anything else but force as the expression of power. They look upon our men as miserable mercenaries whose friendliness is simply an attempt to curry favour with the noble German *Krieger ;* our men regard them as misguided individuals who don't know any better.

The great strain of tenderness in the British soldier comes out most strongly in his attitude of mind towards the wounded and the dead. No British soldier will rest quiet in his trench whilst there are wounded lying out in front, and the deeds of heroism performed by men in rescuing the wounded have been so numerous in this war that it has been found necessary to restrict the number of Victoria Crosses awarded for this class of gallant action. No British soldier will lie quiet while our dead are unburied.

Men will expose themselves fearlessly to recover the body of a comrade and give it decent burial.

A friend of mine in the Cavalry gave me a striking account of a burial service he conducted thus on the Marne. A shrapnel burst right over him and his troop, but by great good luck only one man was killed. The troop was on the move, and it was necessary to bury the man at once. No military funeral this, with the chaplain reciting, "I am the Resurrection and the Life . . ." and a firing-party rigid at attention; but a handful of men scraping a shallow hole in the earth, whilst others removed the dead man's identity disc and effects and equipment. There was no time for prayer, but, my friend said, it was one of the most pathetic ceremonies he had ever attended. They were a rough lot in his squadron, but they showed a great tenderness as they laid the still form in its stained khaki in the ground. "Oh dear! pore ole Jack gorn to 'is last rest!" This and similar ejaculations came from the little group standing at the graveside, the rest of the squadron, with stamping horses, waiting a little distance away. "Now then, chaps, 'ats orf!" cried a veteran private, an old scamp of a soldier who had re-engaged for the war. The men bared their heads reverently as the poor body was laid in the chill earth. Someone produced a rough cross made out of an ammunition-box, with the man's name and regiment written on it in indelible pencil, the grave was filled in, the cross set up, and the squadron proceeded on its way.

The line of fighting of the British Army is marked by these crosses, now gradually being replaced by that

admirable organization, the Graves Commission, which identifies graves and furnishes them with properly inscribed crosses as a permanent identification. Our men do the rest. Troops always look after graves in the vicinity of their billets, plant them with turf and flowers, or, in the case of Catholic soldiers, with statues or holy pictures from the ruined churches which are so plentiful in the fighting zone.

What is the spirit of the British Army in the field ? I have been asked. How was it inculcated, and how is it maintained ? And I would reply that the spirit of our army is the spirit of our public schools, for it was inculcated and is maintained by the Regimental Officer, himself the product of our public schools. In saying this I do not mean that the British Army is dominated by an aristocratic caste. I mean that its spirit of courage, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and public-spirited obedience is the spirit upon which the whole of our public school system is based, a great commonwealth in which no man is for the party, but all are for the State.

The Regimental Officer, who has blazed for himself an imperishable trail of glory in this war, has cherished and fostered this feeling. His spirit of quiet, unostentatious courage, of uncomplaining devotion to duty, of never-failing thoughtfulness for the other man, the new-comer, " the fellow who's a bit rattled, don't you know ?" carries on the tradition of our forefathers who fought with Marlborough and Wellington and Raglan. It is an eminently English spirit. That is why, no doubt, despite the expansion of our little Expeditionary Force into a great demo-

cratic host, our new armies have slipped it on with their tunics and their belts, so that the spirit of the new is the spirit of the old.

When this war is over I shall hope to see a monument erected in London, in the most prominent site that can be found, that the honour may be greater, with the plain inscription, "To the Regimental Officer, 1914." Let it be white like his escutcheon, of marble like his fortitude, and in size vast and overwhelming and imposing like the pile of heroic deeds he has amassed to his credit in all our wars. German organization may have given the German armies high-explosive shells innumerable and machine-guns galore to break our bodies, and asphyxiating gases to stop our breath; they have no weapon to break the spirit of the Regimental Officer, which is the spirit of his men, the spirit of the army. The German Army is inspired by a magnificent military tradition, but it seems to linger principally in the regulars, and to be present only in a diminished form in the officers and men of the Reserve, the *Landwehr*, and the *Landsturm*. For the spirit of the German Army is artificial, the atmosphere of a military caste. The spirit of our army is the spirit of England that sent Drake sailing over the seven seas, that gave our greatest sailor that far-famed "Nelson touch"; it is the vivifying breath of the greatest Empire that the world has ever seen.

"Gentlemen, hats off!" as Napoleon said at the grave of Frederick the Great—hats off to the Regimental Officer. The military correspondent of *The Times* sounded a sane note, in the midst of the great

clamour about the shortage of shells, when he bade us remember the value of good infantry, dashing in the attack, steady on the defensive. The Regimental Officer is the soul of our infantry. No matter that he is a boy, or that he is out from home but a few weeks, his sergeants will do the technical part of the job if needs be. But the Regimental Officer will show them all how to die.

Lord Wolseley used to tell how, standing on the parapet of the earthworks before Tel-el-Kebir, he saw a shell, a huge, clumsy projectile, hurling through the air before him. In an instant the question flashed across his mind whether it was the duty of the Regimental Officer to preserve his life usefully for the battalion, or to take a risk and give the men an example in indifference to danger. The shell answered the question for him by passing him by and bursting innocuously behind him. But I know what Wolseley's, what any Regimental Officer's answer would have been: "Stay where you are and take your chance!"

Revolutionary changes have been wrought in the army in everything, save in its spirit, since the outbreak of the war. We have come to rely on heavy artillery and high-explosive shells and machine-guns; we count our men by the hundred thousand where we counted them by the thousand before. The Territorial, the raw recruit, have proved their metal in the fiercest fire; the Canadian has not belied the reputation of our fighting race. Caste restrictions in the army have been swept away; exclusive regiments are now exclusive only to the incompetent. That jeal-

ously guarded, poorly paid, and, if the truth were told, rather ill-considered little army that the British people kept to fight its battles before August, 1914, has been swallowed up in the millions of Britons who have heard the country's call. But the soul of the army marches on unchanged, with the same self-sacrifice, the same willing obedience, the same admirable discipline. The soul of the army is enshrined in the Regimental Officer. In the remoteness and the obscurity of the trenches and the billets he goes about his work quietly and without fuss, in the same way as he performs the deeds that win him distinction, in the same way that he goes to his death. His men worship him. His Brigadier trusts him. "The Regimental Officer," said a General to me, "by Gad, he's the salt of the earth!"

CHAPTER II

THE WAR OF POSITIONS

THE Germans have a mania for phraseology. Their language lends itself to it, capable, as it is, of accumulative word-building and every kind of permutation. "German is a code, not a language," has been very justly said. Theirs is the pigeon-hole brain in which everything is ticketed with its precise label, and classified under its own particular head. I have been often amused to find them carrying this habit of theirs into military matters. Thus, a German in a letter home, describing an attack on his trench, says that the warning passed along was: "*Höchste Alarmbereitschaft*" (*highest alarm-readiness*).

In the same way they describe trench warfare as the "*Stellungskrieg*," the *war of positions*. It was from a German prisoner that I first heard this expression, a big, fair Westphalian captured at Neuve Chapelle, with whom I had some conversation in the train that was taking him and some 500 of his comrades down to Havre to embark for England. I did not at first grasp what he meant by his continual references to the "*Stellungskrieg*," and asked him what the phrase signified. "'*Stellungskrieg*,'" he said, "you know, what followed the '*Bewegungskrieg*'" (*the war of movements*).

The German mind again! "The war of movements!" What a priceless phrase to flash in the eyes of a blindly credulous people! The phrase has the inestimable advantage of being entirely vague. It does not say *which way the movements went.* I tested my prisoner on this point. He was quite positive that the *Bewegungskrieg* stopped and the *Stellungskrieg* set in by virtue of the carefully laid plans and ripe decision of the Great General Staff, and not of military necessity imposed on the Fatherland by the Allies. "Everybody knows," a German-Swiss paper "kept" by the German Government cried the other day, "everybody knows that there never was a battle of the Marne!" That is the conviction of all German soliders who did not take part in that disastrous and unforgettable retreat.

But this German phrase "*Stellungskrieg*" is a very accurate description of the great stalemate on the western front which we, more vaguely, term "trench warfare." It is, indeed, a constant manœuvring for positions, a kind of great game of chess in which the Germans, generally speaking, are seeking to gain the advantage for the purposes of their defensive, whilst the Allies' aim is to obtain the best positions for an offensive when the moment for this is ripe. It is a siege in which we are the besiegers, the Germans the besieged. I adhere to this view despite the great German thrusts against the Ypres salient. Both these were comparable to sorties *en masse* from a fortress, and in both instances, although the besieged were able to push the besiegers a little farther away from them, they failed to achieve their object, which

was to break the lines of investment, and, if possible, cut off and surround part of the besieging forces.

The situation on the Western front, at least as far as the British line is concerned, for only of that am I competent to speak, represents siege warfare in its highest expression. The opponents face one another in endless lines of trenches winding in and out of the mostly flat country of Flanders, following the lie of the ground or the positions captured or lost in one or other of the great battles which from time to time break the monotony. By monotony I mean only the sameness of life and not inaction. For work never ceases on either side. It is not sufficient to capture, consolidate, and hold a position. The general situation must be reviewed in relation to the ground gained. Its possible weaknesses and the opportunities it offers for strengthening the adjacent positions must be studied. Trenches must be joined up with those captured, redoubts constructed to counteract a danger threatening from some point, and communication trenches dug to afford safe and sheltered ingress to and egress from the new position.

The ground is under ceaseless survey. A move by the enemy calls for a counter-move on our part. A new trench dug by him may be found to enfilade our trenches from a certain angle, and while by the construction of new traverses or the heightening of parapet and parados, the trench may be rendered immune from sniping, a fresh trench will be dug at a new angle, or a machine-gun brought up to make life sour for the occupants of the new German position, and force them in their turn to counter-measures.

Anyone who saw the trenches at Mons or even, much later, the trenches on the Aisne, would scarcely recognize them in the deep, elaborate earthworks of Flanders with the construction of which our army is now so familiar. At Mons our men sought shelter in shallow ditches dug in the ground, the entrenchments of field-days in the Chiltern Hills. In Flanders the trenches are dug deep into the soil, and built up with sandbags high above the ground-level, plentifully supplied with traverses to localize the effect of bursting shells. Very solid affairs, too, these traverses are, great masses of clay firmly bound together with wire-netting and topped with sandbags—stout sacks filled with earth—that can be relied upon to stop a bullet.

Trenches must not be too wide, or they would afford too broad a target to bullets and shells, yet they must be spacious enough to allow comparative freedom of movement to their inmates to pass swiftly from place to place in the event of a sudden attack. They must be roomy enough for the men holding them to live therein with a fair measure of comfort, with places for dug-outs where the men off duty may sleep, and where the officers, who are never off duty, properly speaking, in the trenches, may have their meals and snatch a few hours of slumber between times. There must be safe storage-places for such dangerous wares as ammunition, bombs, fuses, and flares, and specially prepared emplacements for the machine-guns. Sanitation, on which the lives of thousands depend, must also have its special arrangements.

The flooring of the trench must be boarded—sometimes in marshy places with two or three layers of

Underwood & Underwood phot.

A CORNER OF A TRENCH WITH A TRAVERSE ON THE EXTREME LEFT—NOTE OFFICER'S GAS HELMET.

planks—against the wet, with "grids" laid across. In the winter not even pumps sufficed to keep the trenches dry. Sandbags, disembowelled by the continual patter of bullets, must be constantly renewed. A stray shell, plumping through the timber and earth roofing of a dug-out, may do damage that will take three days (or rather nights, if the fatigue-party is in view of the enemy by day) to repair. Then the access to the trenches is a question requiring constant attention and unremitting labour.

Men in the firing-line roundly declare they would rather be in the front trench than in the area behind the lines. Both sides attempt to embarrass the bringing-up of reliefs and supplies by shelling the roads and communication trenches leading up to the firing-line. Of course, nothing is ever allowed to interfere with the sending-up of reliefs or food, but the shells that crash daily, mostly towards evening, behind the lines claim their toll of life. It is to guard against this promiscuous shelling, against snipers posted in coigns of vantage in the enemy lines, and against spent bullets that come whinneying over from the front (gallant John Gough, most beloved of Generals, was struck and mortally wounded by a stray bullet at a long distance from the firing-line, in a spot that was believed to be entirely safe), that communication trenches are necessary.

The amount of work that some of these communication trenches represent is simply incredible. Going up to some trenches in the Ypres salient, I remember, I came across a short patch of road, 200 yards of it at the outside, which was well in view

of the enemy and over which shrapnel burst from time to time, whilst bullets skimmed over it the live-long day. To avoid this dangerous area a communication trench had been dug in the fields bordering the road, and threaded its way in and out of the corn and the poppies for fully a mile before it again rejoined the road, which by this had wound out of view of the Germans. In many parts of the line there is a walk of a mile and a half through communication trenches up to the firing-line.

All these trenches have to be as deep as a man's waist, and many as a man's height. Most of them must have a timber flooring to make them passable in wet weather, and sometimes little bridges have to be constructed to cross the innumerable irrigation ducts and ditches which seam the fertile fields in the region of our army. There must be hundreds of miles of planks in our trenches in Flanders. If you consider that each plank has to be cut and fashioned to fit in its place, after the trench itself has been dug deep enough to be lined, you can form some kind of estimate of the enormous amount of labour which has gone to the welding of our line. As I have trudged down communication trenches behind the regimental guide taking me up to the firing-line, I have often had a sort of mental vision of a vast mountain of energy, as it were, a great sea of sweat and blood, representing the toil and lives expended in the digging of these deep, secure cuttings which are the straight paths leading to the glory of the fighting-line.

I do not think it would be going too far to say that these modern trenches are impregnable to direct

assault. Indeed, the experience of the war of positions has been to show that neither side can succeed on the offensive unless the trenches have been destroyed, and not always then. Well protected in their deep earthworks, the men with the magazine-rifle and the machine-gun can beat off even such tremendous attacks *en masse* as the Japanese essayed with success, though at awful cost, in the siege of Port Arthur. As long as the trenches endure they are impregnable. Their impregnability only vanishes when they cease to exist, when they have been destroyed by shell-fire.

Three epochs of war meet in the war of positions. We have returned to methods and weapons of war which in our proud ignorance we thought to have discarded from our military experience for ever. The short broad knife of the primitive savage, the bomb and sap of the soldiers of Wellington, the machine-gun and heavy howitzer of the scientific inventor of the twentieth century, are the weapons of this war, a combination of brute force and man-slaying machinery which is surely a crowning dishonour to our civilization. In this siege warfare the magazine-rifle, which we believed to be the last word in military progress, has fallen from its place. High explosive, either in giant shells hurled from enormously powerful guns or concealed in mines in the bowels of the earth, to shatter the enemy in his skilfully contrived positions, the bomb and knife for the infantry who sweep forward to complete his discomfiture cowering in hi battered trench, the automatic rifle and machine-gun to mow down survivors still holding out in their

redoubts, with machine-guns playing on the captured position — these are *die Forderung des Tages*, the demand of the moment, in a phrase of Prince Bülow's which was once a political catchword in Germany.

This siege warfare is a war of force against force, the force of machinery dealing ponderous, mighty blows against a wall of steel, smashing, smashing, smashing, always in the same place, until the line is bent, then broken, then the force of man coming into play in a wild onrush of storming infantry, with their primitive passions aflame, surging forward amid clouds of green and yellow and red smoke, bombing and slashing their way through the breach their machines have made. Not the strategist but the engineer is trumps in this warfare, this Armageddon in which, for all our vaunted civilization, we have returned to the darkness of the Dawn of Time.

What I have written of the trenches above will suffice to show, I think, that only the methods of siege warfare—that is, heavy guns and mines—can be used against them with any hope of success. High-explosive shells in unlimited quantities are necessary to keep the hammer pounding away at one given spot. To break a path for our infantry through the weakly held German trenches round Neuve Chapelle we had many scores of guns pouring in a concentrated fire on a front of 1,400 yards for a period of thirty-five minutes. In the operations round Arras the French are said to have fired nearly 800,000 shells in one day. Even this colossal figure was surpassed by the expenditure of high-explosive shells by the German and Austrian armies in their successful thrust against Przemysl.

From "J'ai Vu."

THE WAR OF BOMB AND KNIFE: FRENCH SOLDIERS WITH MASKS AND STEEL HELMETS.

Our bombardment at Neuve Chapelle was, in the main, effective, though barbed-wire entanglements in front of part of the German trenches were not cut, and heavy casualties were thus caused to the infantry when they advanced. For the most part, however, we found the German trenches obliterated, the little village a smoking heap of ruins, and those Germans who survived dazed and frightened amid piles of torn corpses. If this enormous concentration of guns was required to blast a path of 1,400 yards with a thirty-five minute bombardment, what a gigantic concentration of artillery, what a colossal expenditure of ammunition, will be required to drive a wedge several miles deep through positions which the Germans have spent three seasons in strengthening and consolidating!

I make bold to prophesy (fully aware how dangerous this practice is in military matters) that, when the moment arrives for a resolute offensive in the West, the preliminary bombardment will not be a question of minutes or even of hours, but of *days* on end, an endless inferno of fire and steel and smoke in which no man will live. For this is a war of extermination.

My friend and colleague (if he will allow me to style him thus), "*Eye-Witness*," remarked in one of his letters from the front on the bizarre circumstance that, during the lulls in the operations, the principal fighting went on in the air and beneath the ground. Sapping, which has played so notable a part in the war of positions, aims at a local effect as contrasted with bombardment, which covers a much wider area. Sapping, however, possesses the prime and obvious

advantage that it can go forward without the enemy's knowledge, whereas anything like a heavy bombardment will always awake the enemy's suspicions, and enable him to prepare for the attack which he guesses to be impending.

Secrecy is the essence of sapping. The army does not like talking about its mines. You will never find in an official *communiqué* anything but the vaguest indication as to the region in which " we made a sap, laid a mine, and destroyed the enemy's position." An important branch of sapping and mining is the listening for the sound of the enemy's subterranean operations in special " listening galleries " running out at intervals from the main sap. A precise indication of the locality where a mine was exploded, or rather of the trench from which the shaft of the sap was sunk, might not only intimate to the enemy that our sappers and miners were active in that particular sector, but might give him valuable assistance in testing the efficacy of any special apparatus or means he employs for listening underground. As far as human foresight may judge, this book will appear before the war has reached its conclusion, and therefore I must refrain, as in the case of much else I should like to write, but may not under the eye of my friend the Censor, who will scan these pages, from enlarging on the splendid daring, the amazing resourcefulness, and the inexhaustible endurance of our sappers and miners in their subterranean galleries.

I went down one of our mines one night. The proceeding was irregular, I believe, and if I had applied for permission through the official channel I

make no doubt that it would have been refused. Incidentally, I was nearly shot on emerging, but that is another story. I was spending the night in our trenches, and in the course of an after-dinner stroll my host, the Captain in command of this particular section, asked me if I would care to see " our mine." Considerations of the Censorship impel me to abridge what follows up to the moment when I found myself in a square, greasy gallery, with clay walls propped up by timber baulks leading straight out in the direction of the German trenches. Guttering candles stuck on the balks at intervals faintly lit up as strange a scene as I have witnessed in this war.

Deep in the bowels of the earth a thick, square-set man in khaki trousers and trench boots, a ragged vest displaying a tremendous torso all glistening with sweat, was tipping clay out of a trolley, and gently chaffing in quite unprintable English of the region of Lancashire a hoarse but invisible person somewhere down the shaft. I crawled round the quizzer, slipping on the greasy planks awash with muddy water on the floor of the gallery, and found myself confronted by another of the troglodytes, a man who was so coated with clay that he appeared to be dyed khaki (like the horses of the Scots Greys) from top to toe. I asked him whence he came, so different was he, in speech and appearance, from the black-haired, low-browed Irishmen watching at the parapet of the trench far above us. " A coom fra' Wigan !" he said, wiping the sweat from his forehead with a grimy hand, and thus saying he turned round and made off swiftly, bent double as he was, down the low gallery.

I followed, the water swishing ankle-deep round my field-boots. The air was dank and foul, the stooping position became almost unbearable after a few paces, one slipped and slithered at every step. At intervals side-galleries ran out from the main sap, unlit, dark, and forbidding—listening posts. After a hundred paces or so a trolley blocked the way. Behind it two men were working, my taciturn acquaintance and another. The latter was hacking at the virgin earth with a pick, the former was shovelling the clay into the trolley. Heavens, how these men worked! Their breath came fast and regular, they spoke not a word; one heard only the hack, hack, of the pick and the dull smack of the earth-clods as they fell into the trolley. There was no overseer there to harry them, no "speeder-up" to drive. They were alone in their sap, working as though life depended on it (as maybe it did). Good for Wigan, wasn't it?

I had not been out of that mine for more than a minute when an electric lamp flashed in my eyes, and an excitable young man, who held an automatic pistol uncomfortably near my person, accosted me thus: "I beg your pardon, sir"—it occurred to me that the pistol accorded ill with this polite form of address—"but may I ask what you were doing down *my* mine?" My friend, the Captain, rushed forward with an explanation and an introduction, the pistol was put away, and the sapper subaltern—all credit to him for his vigilance!—was easily persuaded to come along to the dug-out and have a drop of grog before turning in.

That night I heard much of mining, its perils and

its humours—of mine-shafts blocked by tons of earth dislodged by shells; of thrilling races underground, when the pick of the enemy sapper could be clearly heard and our men had to pile on every ounce of energy to get their sap finished and the mine laid before the German was "through" with his; of hand-to-hand fights with pick and shovel in cramped places in the dark when two saps meet. Through all the yarns appeared, bright as the flares that shone out above the trench-lines while we sat and talked, the young officer's intense pride in his men, these stout North of England miners "doing their bit" in the bowels of the earth.

One story which made us laugh was the story of the subaltern fresh out from home. He was a keen young officer, as they all are, "smart as paint," as Long John Silver would say, and full of zeal. One night he came to the dug-out of the sapper officer who was supervising the digging of a mine in this particular section of the line.

'You must get up at once," he whispered in his ear, in a voice hoarse with excitement; "it is very important. Lose no time." The sapper had gone to his dug-out worn out after several sleepless nights, and was very loth to sally forth into the cold and frosty air. "It is a mine, a German mine," said the subaltern fresh out from home; "you can see them working through the glasses." The sapper was out in a brace of shakes, and hurriedly followed the subaltern along the interminable windings of the trenches. In great excitement the subaltern led him to where a telescope rested on the parapet. "Look!"

he said dramatically. The sapper applied his eye to the glass. There was a bright moon, and by its rays he saw, sure enough, figures working feverishly about a shaft. There was something familiar about it, though—then he realized that he was looking down his own mine. The wretched youth who had dragged him from his slumbers had forgotten the windings of the trench. This, and much else, the sapper pointed out with great forcefulness before he went back to resume his broken rest, leaving the young officer pondering over the coarse language of the Royal Engineers !

Vermelles is the best example I have seen of the important rôle that sapping plays in this siege warfare. Indeed, this little village, which the French wrested from the Germans by sapping along and blowing it up house by house, is renowned along the entire front of the Allies as a kind of exhibition model of fighting typical of the war of positions. Vermelles is in the Black Country of the North of France, five miles south-east of Bethune, a pretty little village lying on a small ridge running up from a fertile plain. The French Tenth Army, under General Maud'huy, advancing after the failure of the great German thrust against Arras in October, found their passage barred at Vermelles by the Germans, whose machine-guns, their muzzles thrust out of the cellar openings of the houses, held them up at the very entrance to the village. A French frontal attack from the western approaches to the place failed with heavy loss, and tentative attempts from the flanks to carry the village by assault were fruitless. Every house was a German

"Daily Mail" phot.

A BURSTING MINE.

stronghold, bristling with machine-guns, defended by deep trenches, and linked up by telephone with the *poste de commandement*, which was installed in the cellars of the Château of Vermelles under the front steps.

To visit Vermelles, as I was privileged to do, is to get an object-lesson of the methods of the new French Army, that wonderful weapon of efficiency which has emerged finely tempered, pliant, and sharp from the furnace of those first disastrous months of war. Never was the painstaking thoroughness of the French mind seen to better advantage than in the patient and elaborate operations which culminated in the two centres of German resistance in Vermelles, the brewery and the château respectively, being squeezed in a pair of pincers, as it were, and crushed. The French, recognizing that the German machine-guns made a direct attack practically hopeless, sapped their way under each German stronghold in turn, and, having made a breach, rushed in with bomb and bayonet, and made good the position, afterwards sapping on to the next.

I found practically every house in Vermelles roofless, every window broken, every wall pierced with loopholes and pitted with shell-holes and bullet-marks. There were long, narrow trenches innumerable, marking the line of the French saps, and ending in deep, wide craters where the explosion had taken place and opened a passage for the French infantry. Four bleak walls surrounding an immense tumulus of rubbish were all that was left of the château, whose grounds were literally honeycombed with trenches in

all directions. The Germans made their last stand here, holding in turn the two high red-brick walls surrounding the château grounds until the French, by means of a sap more than 100 yards long, blew a breach and rushed the place.

I saw this mine. It starts in the white chalky soil of some kind of garden outside the château wall. This same white soil nearly proved the undoing of the assailants, for the Germans in the château " spotted " the French operations by the high white piles of clay thrown up from the mine almost level with the top of the wall, and our Allies were forced to explode the mine before the operation was quite complete. However, it did its work well. Two huge craters were made right beneath the wall, the masonry of which was blown apart in great chunks, which were still lying about when I visited the spot. The last German resistance was broken. Vermelles was captured. There will be many Vermelles in this war before the Hun is beaten to the ground.

The trench mortar and the bomb have become essential weapons of the war of positions. Both weapons of the past, they seem strangely out of place beside such modern man-slaying instruments as the machine-gun and the magazine-rifle. But they have come in response to the demand of a unique situation because the weapons which military experts believed to represent the last word in progress in their profession no longer sufficed. Handier to manipulate than a field-gun, because much smaller in bulk, of short range, the trench mortar, throwing a heavy bomb filled with high-explosive, might at least blow

in a part of a trench which, as I have shown, in the ordinary way is impregnable to direct assault. There are all kinds of trench mortars, from modern specimens to rudimentary kinds of catapults, knocked together by inventive officers or men in their spare time. The French, I believe, have actually used mortars taken from old fortresses of the days of Vauban.

Of all the ills attendant on the life of the men in the trenches I know of none more trying to the nerves than these trench mortars. As they are fired at close range from the enemy's trench, which may be anything from 30 to 300 yards away, one has no warning of their coming. You hear a sudden report mingled with a kind of screech, and the rush of a heavy body through the air, then a deafening explosion, with a spout of earth and clouds of black smoke and a rain of fragments of iron and earth for yards around. The bombs thrown by the big mortars allow you about two seconds—the interval between the impact and the burst—in which to take cover. The small bombs, on the other hand—which our men call "sausages"—burst on impact, without warning.

Just as the men in the trenches in the winter months adapted their costume to suit the trying climate (rather to the horror of some military martinets out here!), so these weapons of trench warfare have been evolved by the men in the firing-line. The revival of bombing began when a British soldier, to while away an idle moment, put some high-explosive and a lighted fuse in a discarded bully-beef tin, and pitched it into the German trench opposite him. In

his way the British soldier is as handy as the blue-jacket, and the long days of the winter monotony produced all kinds of inventions in the way of mortars and bombs, which led to the scientific development of this mode of warfare. A Territorial officer was discovered making all manner of ingenious bombs and trench appliances in his spare time. He was taken out of the trenches and installed in an empty school, and when last I heard of him had a regular factory turning out bombs for the firing-line.

Bombing is very tricky work. Your bomb must be safe as long as it is in your possession. Nor must it be liable to explosion if dropped after the safety-catch has been removed. That is why bombs are provided with time-fuses. Some nicety of judgment is required to hurl them so that they will explode on impact or immediately afterwards. If the time-fuse has still a second or so to burn when the bomb falls in the enemy trench, a resolute man will pick it up and fling it back, with disastrous consequences to the bomber. Therefore bombers must be trained. The training is extremely simple, but it is essential, and I look forward to the time when every soldier who comes out to France from home will have gone through a course of bombing just as he has gone through a course of musketry. The work of experimenting with bombs and of training in bombing has claimed many victims in our army behind the firing-line, but the blood thus shed has not been spilt in vain, for by every account the bombing companies now attached to each brigade are of invaluable assistance.

In the war of positions the bombers seem to be

obtaining the chances for winning imperishable glory that in the *Bewegungskrieg* fell to the lot of the gunners. The bombers have their motto already, as unalterable as the rule of the sea. "The bombers go first!" Private Appleton, of the bombing company of the 16th (Vancouver) Battalion of the Canadian Division, consecrated the phrase in a *beau geste* which is the spirit of our bombers incorporate. The battalion was attacking a German stronghold known as The Orchard, situated south-east of Festubert, during the successful advance of the First Army on May 20. Just in front of the position a grave and unlooked-for obstacle was encountered in the shape of a deep ditch with a thick hedge on the other side. Many scrambled across the ditch, and at the only opening in the thick-set hedge an officer wanted to lead the way. Then spake Private Appleton, girded about with bombs. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "bombers must go first!"

So the bombers went first. That is the rule of the game. When the first line of German trenches has been captured in an attack, up come the bombers, their bombing aprons lined with pockets (like the skirt of a lady shop-lifter), jogging as they trot along, and plunge, bombs uplifted to fling, into the narrow communication trenches where, behind the first traverse, Death, in grey-green dress, is lurking. The path of the bombers is starred with golden deeds. V.C.'s and D.S.O.'s and D.C.M.'s and M.C.'s reward their prowess sometimes, but more often their recompense has been a few feet of brown earth in Flanders and a corner for ever green in the memory of their fellows.

The bomb goes with the knife. The bayonet fixed on the rifle is too long for the *corps-à-corps* in a narrow trench. When a German trench has been obliterated by a bombardment or an exploded mine and the infantry rush forward, there is no time for the niceties of bayonet drill. You want to get at your man and kill him before he can recover from his shock. The French infantry have been known to fling aside their rifles when the charge sounds, and hurl themselves on the Germans with their bayonets alone or with clasp-knives, or even with knives of their own manufacture.

Lord Cavan, who for many months commanded the famous Guards Brigade in the war, told me of an Irish Guardsman who killed a dozen or so of Germans with a spade. The Irishman was going up a narrow communication trench when a German rushed out round a traverse. The Guardsman shot him with the last cartridge in his magazine. He was so cramped for space that he did not know whether he could spare time to load again, as he knew that other Germans were behind the first. So, quick as thought, he called to a comrade who was working on the parapet of the trench above him. "Show us your spade here, Mike!" The other handed down his spade just as a second German came round the traverse. The Guardsman promptly felled him with a blow that would have killed an ox, and went on "slipping it across them" (as he would have said himself) as fast as they emerged. I believe that in this way he actually accounted for ten or more Germans. The rifle and bayonet will play their part again when the

time comes for an advance over a broad front. For the rush through a narrow breach the knife and bomb are the weapons.

Siege warfare will not be the last word in this war. Opinions vary, but for me there will be no peace of the kind that will banish the German peril for generations to come unless the German lines can be broken and the enemy hurled back in disorder from the North of France far back into Belgium, and maybe beyond. Once the German line is pierced, if only the breach be wide and deep enough, we return to the *Bewegungskrieg*, which is the only kind of fighting in this war for which both sides have a standard of comparison in previous campaigns, and for which consequently the Germans are better equipped than the Allies.

The weapon of the *Bewegungskrieg*, as we learnt in the fighting at the outset of the war, and of the *Stellungskrieg* as well, as often as the armies have "got moving," is undoubtedly the machine-gun. The machine-gun, or, generally speaking, the automatic gun that fires several hundred shots a minute, is, I believe, the principal contribution which this war is destined to make to military science. Just as the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 introduced the needle-gun, and the Franco-Prussian War the *chassepot* rifle, and the South African War was the war of the magazine-rifle, so the present war will be known as the war of the automatic gun. When the German General Staff sits down to write its official history of the Great War, it will be able to attribute the greater part of the success that German arms may have achieved to its foresight in accumulating an immense stock of

machine-guns, and in studying the whole theory and tactics of this comparatively new weapon before any other army in the world became alive to its paramount importance.

When Germany went to war she is believed to have had a very large supply of machine-guns in her army. They were assembled together in a Machine-Gun Corps, on the principle of our Royal Artillery, and the machine-guns were attached to divisions and brigades, with their own divisional and brigade commanders on the same lines as our divisional artillery. I do not know how many machine-guns the British Army possessed, but it was a negligible quantity, somewhere about two per battalion. We had studied the handling and mechanism of the gun and its tactical employment, but had not accustomed the army generally to its usage. Our machine-guns are attached to battalions, and may on occasion be handed over by the brigade to the brigade machine-gun officer for a special emergency. In the German Army, however, the machine-guns are at the immediate disposal of the Division Commander, just as the artillery is. Their utility is thus greatly enhanced, for, instead of being operated according to strictly local requirements, their disposition is governed by the needs of the general situation. An example will best illustrate the value of the German system.

The war correspondent of the *Frankfürter Zeitung*, attached to the German General Headquarters in the West, in a despatch dealing with the operations of the German Army cavalry (*Heereskavallerie*) during the advance on Paris and the retreat from the Marne,

mentions that a *Jäger* battalion, sent out to check the British advance, was able to put *no fewer than twenty-one machine-guns* into line on a front of 1,000 yards against a single British battalion, which as a result was practically destroyed.

The machine-gun has been of priceless advantage to the Germans in this war. If they made good use of it during their advance through Belgium towards Paris, they came to rely almost entirely upon it when their advance was checked and they found themselves called upon to remain on the defensive for many months on end. In all the campaigns of this war it has been the same story. On the western and eastern fronts, in Gallipoli, in Africa, the machine-gun has been the deadliest foe of the attacking force, *because the German, possessing this weapon in far greater numbers than his opponent, has been able by its means to increase the fire-power of his battalions to such a point as to give him actually the effect of superior numbers.* As the offensive is the Allies' only key to success, our salvation lies in the machine-gun, which Sir Ian Hamilton, in his historic Dardanelles despatch, lachrymosely calls " that invention of the devil "—thousands of machine-guns—but also the automatic rifle.

The only factor that furnishes anything like a certain basis for calculation as to the date of the conclusion of the war is the number of fighting-men available for each of the different belligerents. Of all the supplies required for making war, the supply of men is limited. The Germans recognized this sooner than any of their opponents. In the machine-gun they had a machine that does the work of many men.

They reckoned that a machine-gun in a trench on the Western front would release at least a score of men for one of their great thrusts in the Eastern theatre of war. They took measures accordingly.

Time and time again we came up against this deadly weapon. The only bar that stood between us and Lille on that fateful March 10, after the capture of Neuve Chapelle, were the German strongholds, bristling with machine-guns, along the Moulin de Pièvre Road and the fringe of the Bois de Biez. On the Fromelles ridge, at La Quinque Rue, at Hooge in May and June, it was the German machine-guns that stemmed our further advance after our first objectives had been gained and beat us to earth, while the German heavy artillery were getting the range of the new positions and the bombers were creeping forward to drive us back.

The machine-gun is the multiplication of the rifle. The Vickers gun fires up to 550 shots a minute. This is also about the average performance of the German gun. To silence this multiplication of fire you must outbid it, you must beat it down with an even greater multiplication. This is where the difficulty comes in for an attacking force. The machine-gun, with its mounting and ammunition and spare parts, is neither light in weight nor inconspicuous to carry. When the infantry has rushed a trench after the preliminary bombardment, the machine-guns have to be carried bodily forward over a shell and bullet swept area, where the machine-gun detachment is a familiar and expected target for the German marksmen. This is where the automatic rifle is

destined to play a part—a part so decisive, in my opinion, as may win the war for us.

The automatic rifle is a light machine gun. In appearance it resembles an ordinary service rifle, with rather a complicated and swollen-looking magazine. It is not water-cooled like the machine-gun, but air-cooled, and is therefore not absolutely reliable for long usage, as it inevitably becomes heated after much firing. It will fire, however, up to 300 odd shots a minute, and can be regarded as the ideal weapon for beating down German machine-gun fire and checking the advance of bombers while the heavier but more reliable machine-guns are coming up.

Its mechanism is extremely simple. It can be carried at a good pace over a distance of several hundred yards by a single man, and it is not distinguishable from the ordinary rifle except at fairly close range. It is my conviction that the automatic rifle is the key to the machine-gun problem, which has hitherto proved of such insurmountable difficulty to the Allies in the different theatres of war.

It has been said that we hold our trenches with infantry, the French with their 75-centimetre guns—" the black butchers," as my friend, Mr. George Adam, calls them in his admirable book " Behind the Scenes at the War "—but the Germans with machine-guns. The more machine-guns we have—and this view is fully upheld by the new Ministry of Munitions at home—the thinner we can make our front line in the trenches, and the more men we shall accordingly have at our disposal for an offensive at one or more points.

CHAPTER III

THE FIGHT FOR THE SALIENT

I.

The Capture and Loss of Hill 60.

The grass has grown up thick and long about the little graves strung out in a great semicircle about Ypres, marking the line of the famous salient, in the defence of which so many thousands of Britons and Frenchmen cheerfully laid down their lives. Spring and summer have smiled on the wooded and undulating plain about the ruined towers of Ypres, and the profusion of wild flowers, the wealth of green foliage, which their gentle caress has brought forth, has so transformed the land that the awful battle-pictures these green pastures have seen now seem like a far-off dream.

With wise strategy we drew in the horns of the Yser salient on May 3, and fell back to the position we now hold, at the beginning of August, from the Yser Canal, north of Ypres, through Wieltje, Verlorenhoek, and Hooge, back to the foot of Hill 60, and thence down to St. Eloi. Thus a great part of the battlefield, which was the scene of the tremendous struggle lasting from April 17 until May 13, is now in German hands—St. Julien, sacred for ever in the

Empire's history in memory of Canadian gallantry there; St. Jean, where the gallant Geddes died; Zonnebeke, where, by the light of candles stuck in beer-bottles, those gallant doctors, Ferguson and Waggett —Waggett, the throat specialist of Harley Street, now Major Waggett, R.A.M.C.—in the cellars of the ruined houses worked for hours over the wounded, and brought them safely away.

Yet I have contrived to visit in person many corners of the battlefield of Ypres, sometimes a day or two after the great contest had raged itself out. On the *chaussée* by the Yser Canal, north of Ypres, I have seen the humble graves, many of them nameless, in which the poor French victims of the first great gas attack were laid to rest, their rusting rifles and blood-stained uniform close at hand. I have stood in the emplacements of our guns about Ypres amid the putrefying carcasses of horses and piles of empty shell-cases. I have walked through trenches dug across the battlefield where, through fissures in the ground, one yet might see the dead, buried as they died, in uniform.

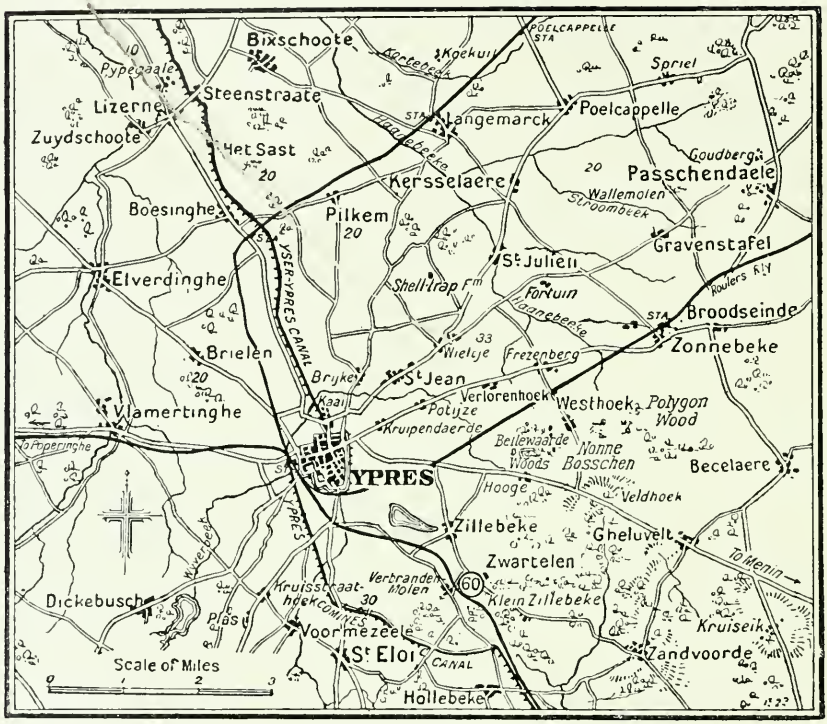
I have looked upon the hill of St. Eloi—the Mound of Death—that tumulus of glory of the Princess Pat.'s. I have seen the brown and scarred top of Hill 60, where in the yawning craters rent by our mines 2,000 Britons and Germans are yet lying awaiting the Last Trump, where shells and bullets have stripped the trees of their last leaf, and where chlorine gas has stained the herbage yellow.

I have talked with the Generals who directed the fight, who spoke eagerly of its strategy and tactics, and

of the undying heroism of our men. I have spoken with the humble privates, whose only recollection of this classic struggle is of long marches over the hard and galling *pavé* of the Belgian roads, of such an inferno of shell-fire as no man ever dreamt of before, of hours spent, hungry and thirsty, with nerves benumbed, in narrow trenches where comrades cried sharply " Oh !" and " Ah !" as fragments of shell or bullets struck them, where dead men sprawled around, where wounded sighed and died, where one fired and loaded and fired and " stuck it," because, avowedly, one wouldn't go back for no bloody German—in reality, because one was British.

I have been among the Canadians who went through the gas horror with a gallantry that made the Empire ring. I have talked with soldiers to whom, but five days out from England, the hell of fire that swept the salient night and day was their first taste of war, and with veterans fresh from the fight on whose breasts the discoloured medal ribbons spoke of former service in the field. From all I have seen myself and all I have heard from others, my mind has focussed so sublime a spectacle of heroism, of pluck undaunted by adversity, of resourcefulnsss never foiled by confusion, that I have felt impelled to try my hand at painting the picture of that battle which history will set down as one of the crucial struggles of the war.

The second battle of Ypres has been called the second German thrust for Calais. It may have become so in the upshot; it was not at the outset. There is no doubt that the Germans were preparing an offensive, the main object of which was to test the



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES.

(From "The Times," by kind permission.)

efficacy of their asphyxiating gas, one of their great devices of "frightfulness" with which the German Government, through its newspapers and its agents, was wont to make our flesh creep. Their offensive was certainly in the nature of an experiment, and it seems probable that the large number of troops which, as my friend and colleague, Mr. James Dunn, *Daily Mail* correspondent at Rotterdam, a week before the battle, warned us, were being transported through Belgium and massed on the Western front were intended to press home any advantage that might be won by the asphyxiating gas.

A decided lack of vigour on the part of the German infantry at Ypres has been attributed, and is probably due, to the fact, clearly established by the statements of prisoners, that the German soldiers were terrified of their gas-cylinders, and showed the utmost reluctance to advance immediately behind their gas-cloud. That they had good reason to look askance at their new instrument of frightfulness is shown by the circumstance that, both at Hill 60 and farther northward in the salient, more than once the gas-cloud was seen to drift back into the German lines. Shortly after the second battle of Ypres I was told by an unimpeachable witness, a Belgian who had escaped from Ghent, that there were German gas victims in the military hospitals there, and that their sufferings had caused the military authorities the greatest embarrassment, owing to the effect thereby produced on the German wounded in the wards. The German soldiers' dread of their unholy ally may to some extent account for the enemy's failure to press home his

advantage, but in my own mind I am convinced that the real explanation is that the German plans were entirely upset by our offensive at Hill 60 on April 17.

As the result of the dashing feat of arms by the 1st Royal West Kents and the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers in capturing the hill, the German offensive was forestalled. The second battle of Ypres, in a figure of speech, went off at half-cock. The German General Staff may well have believed that the attack on Hill 60, instead of being a purely local affair as it really was, was the precursor of a vigorous offensive by the Allies.

The Germans had their pipe-lines laid and their gas-cylinders embedded in front of their trenches in the northern part of the salient. They obviously had no gas at Hill 60, otherwise, seeing that from April 22 on the wind was favourable, they would have gassed the 13th Brigade off the hill immediately the position fell into our hands, instead of waiting until May 1, when they gained a footing on the hill by means of their first gas attac (against the Dorsets), and May 5, when they overwhelmed the Duke of Wellington's and recaptured the position. Believing, then, that the attempt was to be made to pierce their line at Hill 60, they naturally turned their hand to the best offensive weapon they believed themselves to possess —namely, the line of gas-cylinders installed ready for their experiment in the northern part of the salient.

They had been accumulating a formidable concentration of artillery in anticipation of their attack. Their plans were certainly not ripe, for during the battle they had to bring down heavy naval guns from

the Belgian coast to reinforce their artillery. Fortune favoured them in respect of guns.

The second battle of Ypres was an artillery battle. As I have said, the German infantry showed want of vigour. Its attacks, when they were made, were half-hearted and comparatively easily repulsed. Their strength lay in their artillery, of which they possessed guns of all calibres, and used them with a reckless expenditure of ammunition that must have struck our gunners, starved of high-explosive shells, hot with angry envy. From April 22 until May 13 they pounded our men in their trenches, wherever they were, night and day, with relentless energy until the trenches were obliterated in places and choked with débris. They stretched a curtain of fire right across the salient, over Ypres (from which all the main roads radiate like the spokes of a wheel) and far beyond, and the brigades rushed up into action had to traverse this inferno before they came into the fight.

It was a battle of machinery. It was scientific slaughter—death and destruction poured out from miles away. There was a British brigade in the fight that lost all its Colonels but one, and battalions that lost heavily without ever seeing a German. For the Germans not to have won through, against an enemy thrown into confusion by a foul and diabolical surprise and out-gunned from start to finish, is in itself a defeat. Their failure to blast their way through to the sea, which was their objective as the battle developed for them with such unexpected success, must be counted a signal triumph for the Allies—not only for the British troops that held the salient, but also for the gallant

French, whose counter-attacks were instrumental in delaying the onrush of the German hordes down the western bank of the canal.

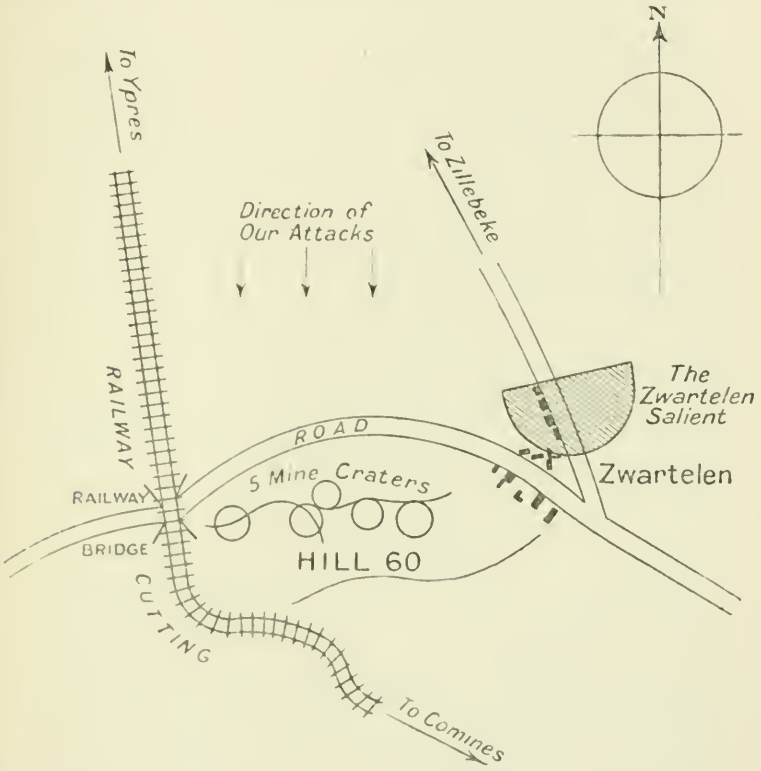
The balance of the second battle of Ypres cannot have been agreeable reading for the Supreme War Lord. On the credit side the gain of a mile or two of a position which we could hardly have hoped to hold against a really strong thrust, on the debit side an expenditure of ammunition, only exceeded by the colossal Austro-German bombardment before Przemysl, and extremely severe casualties. The battle marked the end of all German offensives on the Western front for months, and in this theatre the war relapsed into the state of stalemate, in which Time, most valued ally of the Western Powers, can make his assistance most efficaciously felt against the enemy of mankind.

As, in my opinion, the capture of Hill 60 by the British was in reality the starting-point of the fight for the salient, no account of this historic battle would, I believe, be complete without the story of the capture and loss of the hill, a chaplet of stirring incidents in which the 13th Infantry Brigade won immortal glory. In order to make a connected narrative, I will group together the incidents marking the capture and loss of Hill 60, though, in reality, the fight for the salient had begun before the hill was finally lost.

* * * * *

Hill 60 lies in an isolated position on the extreme western ridge of the Klein Zillebeke Ridge with the Ypres-Comines railway-line, which here runs through

a deep cutting, spanned by a small bridge on the one side and the Klein Zillebeke-Zwartelen Road on the other. It is a low hill, with a flattish top, about 45 feet above the surrounding country. The Germans



held the upper slopes and the summit of the hill, while our trenches ran round the lower slopes.

For some months before the events which I am about to describe the trenches round Hill 60 were held by a division whose General was not slow to recognize the strategical advantage which the possession

of the hill conferred. He accordingly began to make his plans to this end, but before he could bring them to fruition his division was ordered north to take over some of the line from the French.

It fell to the lot of the 13th Brigade to put to the test the plan for the capture of the hill. Like all successful offensives, the attack was the object of the most minute preparation in advance. It was decided that the summit of the hill should be mined, after which the infantry should advance to the capture of the hill. While underground the mining operations went forward, the Brigadier reconnoitred the positions in person. Finally everything was ready for the attack, which was timed to be launched at seven o'clock on the evening of April 17.

The 1st Royal West Kents, otherwise " The Gallant Half-Hundred," and the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers, who were for so long in garrison in Dublin, were entrusted with the initial attack. Officers and non-commissioned officers received their instructions as to the order in which the storming parties were to go forward, ammunition and bombs were laid ready, the doctors selected their regimental aid-posts, where first aid is administered to the wounded, and all along the line the requisite measures were taken for the replenishment without delay of the supplies in men, ammunition, and provisions as the wastage of the fight should make itself felt. So it is before every engagement. Meanwhile the West Kents and the K.O.S.B.'s spent a long day in the trenches on the fateful April 17, waiting for the shadows to fall and the hands of the watch to point to 7 p.m. When an

attack of this kind is impending men's nerves are strung up tight. It speaks well for the discipline of these two battalions that they stood the test without a trace of nerves.

Thin blue threads of smoke were rising from the German trenches into the clear evening air when, with a dull, low thud, accompanied by a billowing quiver of the earth, the summit of Hill 60 was blown sky-high in an immense black spout of earth and débris and human fragments. Immediately afterwards, with a deafening roar, the second mine went up—exploding, it is believed, a German mine with it, so loud was the report. In the space of a minute or two five mines were touched off, and immediately after our artillery opened rapid fire on all the German positions in the vicinity, on the woods in the rear, on the ruins of Zwartelen village on the left (see map), and on the railway cutting. As our guns spoke, Major Joslin, who was commanding the West Kents' storming party, standing beside the Royal Engineers officer who fired the mines, blew the charge on his whistle, and the attack got away, the bombers in front.

The Germans were as completely surprised as they were at Neuve Chapelle. Their trenches had been practically obliterated, and in their place appeared five yawning craters, the largest of which measured about 50 yards across by 40 feet deep. These gulfs were filled with dead and wounded men. A few Germans made a show of resistance, but were speedily accounted for. Many who fled headlong across the open behind their trenches were mown down by our machine-guns,

which had been expecting this development. The West Kents went through the craters and bombed their way down the communication trenches into the German support trenches, while digging parties of the K.O.S.B.'s set about making trenches across the lips of the craters.

At 7.20 p.m. Hill 60 was ours.

The loss of the hill was a bad shock for the enemy. He did not recover from it that evening at any rate. After a rather feeble bombardment with "whizz-bangs," he attempted three counter-attacks in the small hours of the morning, but they were easily smothered by our machine-gun fire.

As the night wore on, however, his bombardment began to increase in violence. The K.O.S.B.'s, who came up to the relief of the West Kents about 2.30 a.m. (April 18), came in for it badly. It was pitch dark, and the going was made difficult by the holes in the ground, the dead bodies scattered around, and the innumerable strands of broken barbed wire strewing the Hill. Major Joslin was killed, so was the company commander of the relieving party, while Major Sladen, the commanding officer of the K.O.S.B.'s, was wounded and his Adjutant mortally wounded. It was a subaltern who finally took the K.O.S.B.'s into their new trenches on the hill-top.

By this time the German bombardment was extremely severe. High-explosive shells were bursting in regular volleys on the exposed slopes, and the Germans, whose trenches in some places were but a few yards distant from ours, separated by only a sand-bag barrier thrown across a communication trench,

kept up a merciless fusillade of bombs. The flares broke in a gush of green light over the battered hill, showing the green and yellow eddies of smoke from the bursting projectiles. But the K.O.S.B.'s, swathed in choking smoke, their trenches clogged with the dead and wounded, kept a brave heart. Some of them actually whiled away the night in song, shouting in chorus that ditty which is, above any other, the song of our fighting-men in Flanders:

> "Here we are! Here we are!
> Here we are again!
> Tommy, Jack, and Pat, and Mac, and Joe!"

Dawn stole with lemon streaks into the sky, and found them there amid the bursting shells. But they had had to give ground a little and abandon the trenches on the far side of the crater on the extreme left of our position.

Their condition was rather precarious, and the West Kents sent a company up in support. The officer commanding the company described how he found the K.O.S.B.'s Captain dead in the crater between the British and German trenches, on top of a pile of dead and wounded men so thick that "*hardly a portion of the ground could be seen.*"

At 11.30 a.m. the Duke of Wellington's (The West Riding) Regiment, 2nd Battalion, arrived to relieve the K.O.S.B.'s and West Kents, who by this time had been able to retain possession of only three of the craters on the near side of the hill (the three right-hand craters in the map). "The Duke's," as they are called, did magnificently that day. "The Old Duke would be

as proud of you to-day as he was when he commanded you," the Brigadier said afterwards in addressing the shattered remnant of the battalion that came away from the hill. Despite the rain of shells and bombs, they held on grimly all through the day. By the early afternoon the Germans had recaptured the whole of the hill save only for a section behind the second and third craters (counted from the right in the map), where " The Duke's " still resisted. Their General saw them clinging to the brown, scarred ridge " like a patch of flies on the ceiling."

The day wore on and " The Duke's " still held out. It was decided to relieve the pressure on them by a counter-attack with artillery support. The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were brought up, and at six o'clock " The Duke's," their numbers thinned, it is true, by heavy casualties, particularly in officers, were over the parapet and away, their fellow county men of Yorkshire at their heels. Behind came some of the K.O.S.B.'s and the " Q. Vic.'s " (the Queen Victoria Rifles, that well-known London Territorial battalion). These young Londoners covered themselves with glory in this day's fighting and later. Second Lieutenant Woolley, one of their subalterns, won the Victoria Cross for a magnificent display of endurance and gallantry.

" B " Company of " The Duke's," on the right, reached the German trenches, and established themselves there with slight loss; " C " Company had to cross open ground, got badly hammered, and only Captain Barton and eleven men reached their objective. They never stopped to see how many men

they had lost, however. They went for their crafty enemy with bayonet and bomb, and killed or routed every man in the trench. Their blows would have been struck doubly hard had they known what stood before. "D" Company, on the left, had also a patch of open country to traverse. All its officers were killed or wounded in its passage over the broken ground swept by shell and machine-gun fire, but with the help of the stout-hearted Yorkshire Light Infantry it managed to secure the trench.

Hill 60 was ours once more. It would still be in our hands to-day but for the German crime against civilization and humanity, the nameless horror of the asphyxiating gas. Sir John French said as much in his despatch on the second battle of Ypres (dated "Headquarters, June 15"). Referring to the loss of Hill 60, the Commander-in-Chief wrote:

"The enemy owes his success . . . entirely to the use of asphyxiating gas. It was only a few days later that the means, which have since proved so effective, of counteracting this method of making war, were put into practice. Had it been otherwise, the enemy's attack on May 5 would most certainly have shared the fate of all the many previous attempts he had made."

On the morning of the 20th, in the small hours, the 13th Brigade, exhausted by its spell of hard fighting, was relieved by the arrival of another brigade, which took over the hill. The East Surreys and the Bedfordshires went into the trenches, and forthwith had to bear the brunt of a whole series of most desperate efforts made by the Germans to recapture the hill, or,

failing that, to prevent us from consolidating the positions gained. Desperate hand-to-hand fights, bombing encounters, and point-blank rifle and machine-gun fire, together with an incessant stream of shells, marked the whole of that day and the following night, when the Devons came up and relieved.

The East Surreys and the Bedfords fought most gallantly, and were splendidly seconded by the 6th King's Liverpools, a Territorial battalion, which, notwithstanding the terrific fire, rendered very real support to the regulars in the front line by carrying up stores of all kinds throughout the fighting. A quartermaster-sergeant of the Bedfordshires paid a fine tribute to the work of these gallant Territorials. "The approaches to our positions," he wrote to me, "were swept by a storm of bullets and shells of all kinds, and they ('The King's') had a large number of casualties, but they never flinched, and it was largely owing to the manner in which they kept up the supply of hand-grenades and ammunition of all kinds that we were able to hang on and finally drive back the enemy's attacks."

The losses of the East Surreys and the Bedfordshires were very severe, but two V.C.'s and many other decorations were afterwards awarded to the two battalions in recognition of their fine behaviour.

In the meantime the 13th Brigade had marched off to its rest-billets, looking forward to a spell of well-earned repose. But it was not to be. Hardly had the brigade settled down in its new quarters before urgent orders reached the Brigadier to push it up with all speed through Ypres to the Pilckem Road in

support of the French, who had been driven in by the German gas attack, and of the Canadians, whose flank had been left " in the air " by the French withdrawal.

The Germans could not do without Hill 60. They wanted it notably as a vantage-point from which to sweep the Ypres salient with a rain of fire to support the tremendous effort, which they were just developing, to pierce the Allied line. " Necessity knows no law " is a saying that served to justify in German eyes the murder of Belgium. It served equally well to explain (if the moral aspects of the question were ever discussed, which I doubt) the employment of gas to wrest from our grasp the hill we had won and held with untarnished weapons.

On May 1 the gas appeared on Hill 60. The Dorsets held the line. It was in the early hours of the morning that a low greenish cloud came rolling over the top of the hill on to our trenches. Our men were taken unawares, unprepared. Of respirators they had none. Respirators were only just beginning to arrive at the front as the result of an appeal made to the women of England after the gas attack against the French and Canadians on April 22 and 24. In a minute or two the gas had got the Dorsets in its grip, and they were choking with its stifling fumes. The Germans came on at them behind their gas-cloud, but the Dorsets were ready for them. Half-asphyxiated as they were, they scrambled on the parapet of the trench and swept down the advancing files with machine-gun and rifle-fire.

That day the spirit of England, as enshrined in the begrimed and mud-stained exterior of these Dorset-

shire lads, rose superior to the menace of a hideous and long-drawn-out death. Again and again throughout the morning and afternoon messages came down from the Dorsets on the hill to the Devons in support asking for machine-gun ammunition. All day long the Devons waiting in the woods heard the brave tap-tapping of the machine-guns on the hill, and knew that the Dorsets were keeping their end up.

The Devons went up in relief that night, cleverly led to our trenches without the loss of a man. They still speak with reluctance of the sights that met their eyes on the way, for the fields were strewn with many gallant Dorsets who had crawled into the fields and ditches to die. The men cursed the Germans savagely as they stumbled over the prostrate forms.

The 13th Brigade had not taken " The Duke's " into action with them at Ypres, and on May 4 this battalion relieved the Devons on the hill. The following morning the Germans made another and stronger bid for the position. At eight o'cloc in the morning of a balmy May day they opened their gas-cylinders behind the crest of Hill 60, and presently, " like mist rising from the fields," in the words of an eyewitness, the vapours came creeping up in greater volume than ever. At the same time the German guns opened a heavy bombardment.

The gallant " Duke's " were overwhelmed. The ordeal was too severe. They were forced to give ground. Alone they stood the full brunt of the attack, officers and men sticking to the trenches until the sandbags fell in upon them, until there was no room to move for dead and wounded men and débris.

Standing at the entrance to his dug-out in the rear that morning, the Adjutant of "The Duke's," as he afterwards told me himself, saw an officer and an orderly staggering towards him. The officer spoke in a gasping voice. "They've gassed 'The Duke's,'" he said. "I believe I was the last man to leave the hill. All the men up there are dead. They were splendid. I thought I ought to come and report." The officer was new to the regiment, having been detached from the 3rd East Yorks for service with "The Duke's" after the heavy losses of the latter at Hill 60 on the 18th. The high spirit of duty that impelled him, a dying man, to struggle down the hillside and make his report is characteristic of the British regimental officer. He died at the field ambulance that night, a hero if there ever was one. He was Captain G. U. Robins.

The situation was highly critical. The Devons in support at the foot of the hill collected every man they could find, and lined them up in anticipation of a German rush. It never came.

The British Army has passed through some stern trials in this war, but I doubt if any were more terrible than the ordeal of May 5 at Hill 60. The sun shone hotly out of a cerulean sky on the slopes of the hill, where the dead lay in thick clusters on the grass stained yellow by the gas-fumes. The railway cutting was a shambles, dead and wounded lying in places so thickly that men had to move them out of the way in order to pass. Our soldiers, who went along the cutting where the shells were crashing with reverberating explosions, were positively sickened at the

sights they saw, and filled with fierce anger against the fiends who had perpetrated this nameless crime.

The men at Hill 60 had their fight to fight out alone. Farther to the north one of the greatest battles of the war was raging. The horrors of the hill and the railway cutting were but an incident in the mighty struggle of nations which was swaying to and fro in the fields and woods about Ypres. Yet it had cost in lives many more men than the costliest battle of the South African War.

Now the 13th Brigade, which had shortly before come out of the inferno about Ypres, returned to Hill 60 with orders to counter-attack and recapture it if possible. We were back in our old positions on the lower slopes of the hill. The work had to be begun again. It was tired men who had to do it. Such is the fortune of war.

West Kents and K.O.S.B.'s were again to furnish the storming parties. It was a pitch-black night. Not even a flare rent the inky curtain which had descended on the hill. Craters and holes innumerable, dead bodies, fragments of timber, splintered barbed-wire posts, miles of barbed wire in inextricable tangles, made a forward rush impossible. But the hill had to be taken, and the army had entrusted the gallant "Half-Hundred" and the lads of the Kilmarnock bonnets with the task. So on the stroke of ten they were ready to go, the West Kents on the left, the K.O.S.B.'s on the right.

It was a desperate undertaking, and it failed from the outset. As the first files of men clambered out over the parapet, the Germans, as though they had been waiting for the attack, opened a storm of shell

on them, while the air fairly whizzed with machine-gun bullets. Only a few officers and a handful of men reached the German trench, and were there shot down or took cover in the numerous shell-holes dotted about.

With the first light of daybreak another attempt was made to gain the hill. The Yorkshire Light Infantry and the Cheshires attacked, supported on either side by the bombers of the Irish Rifles and the K.O.S.B.'s respectively. Two companies of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, despite a murderous fire, fairly burst their way into the Zwartelen salient, a very strong German redoubt, and were never heard of again. The Germans in their stronghold enfiladed the Cheshires on the right, and after a desperate struggle we had to fall back to our trenches. Throughout the night heavy fighting, often at close quarters with bomb and bayonet, went on amid a terrific bombardment, whilst from the north the guns thundered incessantly.

That was our last attempt to capture Hill 60. Honeycombed with mines, eviscerated, battered, and blasted, the summit of the hill lay abandoned and desolate when I visited the positions in July. The dead were still lying in the craters, huge yawning chasms of crumbling brown earth, the edges strewn with a wild jumble of rags of uniform, haversacks, splintered rifles, and barbed wire. Just below the summit the German trenches, with sandbags of brown and blue and red and green, wound their way round the side of the hill, seeming to tower above our narrow trenches which clung to the lower slopes.

II.

The Fight for the Salient.

The afternoon of April 22 was drawing to a close, and a fresh breeze was blowing from the north-east, when the German Supreme Command decided that the moment had arrived for the perpetration of the crime that will brand the German Army with infamy until the end of time. Our line about Ypres ran, more or less as the first great German thrust for Calais had left it in November, in a wide semicircle about Ypres. The French were on our left on the east bank of the Yser Canal, along a line running eastward through Langemarck to the point where our line began. Here the Canadian Division was in the trenches which went through Kersselaere along the Gravenstafel ridge to a point adjacent to the cross-roads at Broodseinde, where the 28th Division under General Bulfin held the line as far as the outer, the eastern, edge of the Polygon Wood. Here the 27th Division under General Snow took over the line which bent back westward down to where the 5th Division was in position about Hill 60.

This, then, was the famous salient of Ypres. It was in the northern part that the Germans launched their first gas attack, and one can imagine with what eager expectation their gas engineers throughout that fine April day fingered the taps of the cylinders embedded in front of their trenches, where our outlook men had observed them working for several weeks before. We have never heard the French version of what happened after 5.15 on the evening of April 22, when the fatal greenish-yellow cloud, the significance

of which no man could fathom at that time, rising to about man's height, began to roll sluggishly forward from the white and blue sandbags marking the German line. We only know that our artillery observation officers in their different coigns of vantage in this region saw a mysterious greenish haze hovering over the French lines, and that presently down all the roads leading from the canal to Ypres and Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe a stream of French infantry and Turcos appeared, most of them with terror in their faces, with streaming eyes and gasping breath, in the grip of a horror they feared because they did not understand it.

It was a grim and awful ordeal to be the first to endure a method of warfare so diabolical in its conception, so fiendish in its effects, that its equal has hardly been encountered in all the blood-stained history of man. The whole British Army applauded the noble words in which its Commander-in-Chief alluded to the conduct of the French on that occasion. In his despatch of June 15 Sir John French said, referring to the gas attack on the French: "I wish particularly to repudiate any idea of attaching the least blame to the French Division for this unfortunate incident. After all the examples our gallant Allies have shown of dogged and tenacious courage in the many trying situations in which they have been placed throughout the course of this campaign, it is quite superfluous for me to dwell on this aspect of the incident, and I would only express the firm conviction that, if any troops in the world had been able to hold their trenches in the face of such a treacherous and

altogether unexpected onslaught, the French Division would have stood firm." We know now that many of our brave Allies, both officers and men, stayed and died at their posts, victims of slow asphyxiation. You may find the graves of many of them to-day, among other places by the canal bank, around Ypres, and in a little burial-ground close to a road leading out of Poperinghe.

Fortunately, the healthy respect the Germans had for their new ally delayed their advance, and enabled the news of the overwhelming of the right of the Allied line to reach General Headquarters, where it was received with amazement. Prompt measures were taken, for it was at once recognized that the Canadian left was dangerously exposed.

The fact that the Germans had, on April 20, started bombarding Ypres with 17-inch shells had aroused the suspicions of General Bulfin, commanding the 28th Division, which was on the right of the Canadians. Knowing that most of the practicable roads from west to east led through Ypres, he very wisely ordered everything to come east of the city, in anticipation of some German move which at that time he was unable to fathom. The most urgent need of the moment, after the retirement of the French, was to fill the gap left in the line between the French who had escaped the poisoned gas and were still in their old positions and the Canadian left. Colonel Geddes of the Buffs was accordingly put in command of four battalions in reserve east of Ypres—the Buffs, the Middlesex, the 5th King's Own, and the Yorks and Lancaster—and two Canadian battalions in billets at

Wieltje, and sent up to stop the gap. At the same time the 13th Brigade, which had just emerged exhausted from the fighting at Hill 60, was rushed up from its rest-billets to support the French and the Canadians along the Pilckem Road.

It was a critical night for the Canadians. The Germans, realizing at last that the French trenches opposite their gas-cylinders were unoccupied, and that their experiment had succeeded beyond their wildest hopes, had advanced, and were now threatening the Canadian flank. Advancing with the utmost gallantry, Geddes's strange conglomeration of British and Canadian troops had succeeded in capturing by assault a small wood west of the village of St. Julien, in which four 4·7 guns—the 2nd London Heavy Battery—lent to the French some time before, had fallen into German hands. The 10th Canadian Regiment and the Canadian Highlanders made a most spectacular and splendid charge through the wood that night, routing the Germans and recapturing the guns. Unfortunately, the "heavies" could not be brought away, so the breech-blocks were removed and the guns otherwise rendered useless.

That night the Canadians bent back their left flank against the attack they knew could not be long delayed. Indeed, reports showed the Germans to be busy outside their trenches. The Canadians dug themselves in along their new line whilst the dawn came creeping up heralding the day that was to win immortal glory for the Maple Leaf. They knew that they must hold out against the arrival of the British troops which were coming to reinforce them, and of

the French reinforcements which were hastening up to try and regain what had been lost.

It was at 4 a.m. that the gas was released. It came on in its sluggish rolling billows against the Canadians lined up behind their sandbags on the Gravenstafel ridge from a distance calculated by the Winnipeg Rifles (8th Canadian Battalion) to be about 200 yards. They had time to load and discharge two charges of their Ross rifles before the gas was on them, rolling over the parapet, creeping in and out of the sandbags and eddying into the dug-outs. Urgent messages were telephoned back to the batteries as the Germans were seen assembling in front of their main trench. The enemy waited ten minutes or so before attacking, and when they did come on were driven back by our guns and the rifles of the men who were still able to stand upright.

For the Canadians stood fast. As long as the Empire endures the story of their fight shall live. Stifled like wasps in a nest, battered incessantly by a terrific bombardment which increased in intensity as the day wore on, they held out grimly. The Highlanders in the wood west of St. Julien, badly enfiladed, as the flank was bent back here, got the full blast of the vapours, but they would not fall back. At one place where part of one battalion was forced to evacuate their trench, the survivors made an extraordinarily plucky attempt to reoccupy it in the face of a withering fire.

The Canadian left—the 3rd Canadian Brigade—was sorely pressed. Once the brigade sent word to its sister brigade—the 2nd Canadian Brigade—on its

right that the Germans were advancing unchecked on its trenches. Two platoons were despatched as reinforcements, and some of the Northumberland Fusiliers under Lieutenant Hardy. One of this officer's reports was so characteristic of the circumstances of this epic fight and of the spirit in which our men went through with it that I think it is worth quoting textually. Here it is:

"*The greater part of the officers and men are asphyxiated by gas. I understand that the enemy is on three sides of me. Unless I am reinforced fairly well, it will be impossible to do anything great.*"

You observe no trace of panic, no heroics; just a blasé suggestion that, failing reinforcements, the "Fighting Fifth" might not be able to live up to its fine record and *do anything great.*

Soon after noon word reached the Canadian left that it was to fall back. But the Brigadier, hearing that the other brigade was going to counter-attack, decided to stay where he was and await developments. He communicated this decision to his troops, whereupon the officers sent back word to say they would hang on as long as they had a man to line the parapet.

It now became clear that St. Julien and the wood could no longer be held. The Canadian left had withstood all through the day of the 23rd furious onslaughts from three sides, and a fresh gas attack on the morning of the 24th settled the question. The left brigade fell back on a line running from St. Julien to Fortuin whilst awaiting the arrival of reinforcements from a British Division, which was coming up with all speed through a deadly zone of

shell-fire. This was the morning of the 24th. By this time the Germans to the north had succeeded in establishing themselves on the west bank of the canal, having captured Steenstraat and some works south of Lizerne from the French.

On the 23rd Sir John French had had an important interview with General Foch, one of the most brilliant of the French Generals, who commands the left group of French Armies. General Foch gave the British Generalissimo a clear account of what had happened, informed him of his intention to make good the original line, and requested him to allow the British troops to hold on until the necessary reinforcements could arrive. Sir John French agreed to do this, but stipulated that he could not suffer his troops to remain in their present exposed position for an unlimited period of time.

It was now imperative to hold the Germans at all costs. There were two highly critical periods in the battle, and the first began now with April 24. On the canal bank Geddes's detachment, reinforced by some battalions of the 13th Brigade, had been making a series of small attacks on the Germans at a heavy price but with good effect, for the Germans never got through here. The Lahore Division of the Indian Corps subsequently relieved Geddes's gallant troops at the very moment that their intrepid leader, his work done, paid the supreme sacrifice. He was killed by a shell on the 26th in the upper room of a house in which the General commanding the 13th Brigade had established his headquarters, and where Geddes spent the night. The shells were bursting continually about the vicinity when Colonel Geddes

arrived, and he was killed by one which entered the breakfast-room the next morning. The General commanding the 13th Brigade had a providential escape, as he had left the room to fetch a map a few seconds before.

The retirement of the Canadian left from St. Julien on the 24th had exposed the flank of the Canadian Brigade on the right, and it was essential to stop the gap. By this time General Hull's 10th Brigade of the 4th Division, which was coming up to reinforce the Canadians, had reached the canal, and was on its way to Wieltje, where it arrived at 2.30 a.m. the following morning. It had been placed under the orders of the General commanding the Canadian Division, who sent an urgent message asking the brigade to attack St. Julien immediately.

It was a desperately difficult undertaking. The night was extremely dark, the ground, which had not been reconnoitred, was honeycombed with trenches and strewn with barbed wire, and, moreover, the artillery had not been able to " register "—that is to say, get its range of the *terrain*. Just before the attack was launched word came back that some Canadians were still holding out in the village of St. Julien. Therefore the place could not be shelled. The guns, however, opened on the wood west of the village.

It was half-past four in the morning when the attack got away. The 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, a Territorial battalion that was on its trial that day, led with splendid dash on the right, the 1st Warwicks on the left. They were followed on right and left respectively by the 1st Royal Fusiliers

and the 2nd Dublins, whilst the 2nd Seaforths were ordered to connect with General Riddell's Brigade of the Northumbrian Division, which had been sent up to relieve the Canadians.

As soon as our men got out of their trenches they were met by a terrific machine-gun and rifle fire at close quarters, whilst the German heavy guns in the rear spouted a continual torrent of shells over the fields through which the assault was delivered. Our men dropped left and right, but they never wavered, and the Irish Fusiliers and the Dublins, Irishmen all, fighting shoulder to shoulder, actually got into the outskirts of St. Julien. The scattered ruins, the maze of trenches, and the barbed wire strung out everywhere, seriously delayed these two battalions and checked our advance. Two battalions of a brigade of the Northumberland Division, supporting the Dublins, lost their direction. These men had only been a few days in France, and were advancing over country which was totally unknown to their officers and themselves. On the left the Warwicks and on the other flank the Highlanders got to within 70 yards of the German trenches in front of the wood. Here they were hung up, and could make no further progress. They dug in, and were "properly hammered," in the words of one who was there, by German high-explosive shells. Nevertheless, by this gallant attack, the gap between the Canadians east of St. Julien and north of Fortuin was filled.

The next day another attack on St. Julien was delivered, but also without success. General Riddell, commanding the Northumberland Brigade of the

Northumbrian Division, received a pressing order from the Canadians to attack with the Lahore Division and a battalion of General Hull's Brigade. There had been no time to reconnoitre. It was for this brigade a "boost in the dark," but the urgency of the crisis admitted of no delay. So our men went forward again, three battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Indians, straight into an inferno of shell and rifle fire. All through the afternoon they struggled on under a terrific bombardment, the worst that the battle had brought forth up to that time. At half-past three the gallant Riddell was killed by a bullet as he was going up to see for himself the position of his battalions, who had dug themselves in 200 yards away from St. Julien.

Let us pause a minute here, and contemplate the work of this North Country Territorial Division. Landed in France on April 19, five days later the stout North Countrymen, the majority of whom were miners from Northumberland, Yorkshire, and Durham, were undergoing an ordeal of fire which tried the nerves of our hardiest veterans. They knew nothing of the country, they had had no practical experience of war. In the ordinary course of events they would have had a progressive course of acclimatization in the field before taking their turn of duty in the firing-line as a divisional unit. "Had they been only a couple of months in France," a competent observer said to me after the battle, "their losses would not have been so heavy. There are things about this war which no amount of careful training at home can teach. But the need for reinforcements was imperative, and they

had to go into the fight. They never flinched from their ordeal. They fought and died like men."

That was a Territorial division, if there ever was one, men of the same mould, of the same speech, mostly led by the men they were wont to follow in their civilian callings. In battle, says the old German song, a man must depend on himself. That is what the Northumbrian Division did. On them, the untried battalions of but five days' active service, devolved the proud honour of serving the Empire as a homogeneous unit, and they did not shirk the call. The mind dwells with a thrill on the advance of those sturdy, thick-set fellows suddenly confronted with the most hideous side of modern war, yet accepting the ordeal stolidly, unflinchingly, with many a rough word of encouragement and comfort bandied from mouth to mouth in their broad northern speech.

The abandonment of St. Julien had placed the Canadian right in a precarious position. Their position on the Gravenstafel ridge, which had now become the acute angle of the salient, was untenable. Another brigade of the Northumbrian Division having come up to their relief with great difficulty, the Canadians fell back on the night of the 26th to behind the Hannabeek stream. After that the Canadian Division was withdrawn, its place being taken by the Lahore Division, part of the 4th Division, and the Northumbrian Division.

Some battalions of the Durham Light Infantry of the Northumbrian Division which carried out the relief came in for a most tremendous hammering from German 8-inch guns. One battalion on the Graven-

stafel ridge repelled an attack delivered by several German battalions at 2 p.m. on the 26th, losing all save one officer and fifty men, but then had to retire. The Germans, pressing forward, started to envelop, so our men fell back in good order to behind the Hannabeek stream. Other battalions of this regiment were sent to stop a gap where the Germans, pushing on after the Canadian retirement, had broken through at Zevenkote. They, too, suffered heavily from the terrific German bombardment, and, indeed, never caught a glimpse of the enemy at all. On the evening of April 26 they dug themselves in on a line near Zevenkote to the left of the railway-line skirting Zonnebeke.

The retirement of the Canadians from the Gravenstafel ridge had created a grave situation for the brigade on its right, the left-hand brigade of the 28th Division, which, you will remember, was holding the centre of the salient. When the Canadians fell back, the Royal Fusiliers' flank was left " in the air," as the saying goes. The 11th Brigade of the 4th Division, which had come to the relief of the Canadians, arrived most providentially, and the Hampshires were rushed up to get connection with the " Seventh " in their perilous position.

On the 25th the Germans delivered a furious attack against the East Surreys and the Middlesex, but the Londoners stood firm and beat the Boche back to his trenches, the Surreys capturing a number of prisoners. The order was to hold the line at all costs, and it was held. Both battalions behaved splendidly, but one must make particular mention of the gallantry of the

8th Middlesex, a Territorial battalion, which stood its first taste of modern war with admirable coolness.

All next day the Germans kept up a tremendous bombardment, and a gap appeared between the Hampshires and the Royal Fusiliers, the point of least resistance of our line here. It was eventually filled by the Shropshire Light Infantry at dusk. Some battalions of the Northumbrian Division were brought in to reinforce the line here.

Meanwhile on the extreme left the French had carried out their promise, and had counter-attacked. In conjunction with our gallant Indian troops, who fought most stoutly in this battle, they were able to push the enemy farther north. The French recaptured Lizerne, and made some progress at Steenstraat and Het Sas; but the Germans, profiting by the north-easterly breeze, which unexpectedly held in their favour during the greater part of the three weeks' fighting, made free use of their gas-fumes, and little real progress was realized. All through the 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th the Germans kept up a tremendous bombardment right round the curve of the salient. Our line now ran from the canal straight across the Ypres-Langemarck Road in front of St. Julien, through Fortuin to Zevenkote, and thence bent round Zonnebeke (for Broodseinde had had to be abandoned), through the Polygon Wood, back to Hill 60. The Germans made full use of their superiority of artillery, and swept the trenches with a never-ending deluge of heavy projectiles and mortar bombs, while all the roads leading through Ypres to the front were sprayed day and night with fire.

Not Meissonnier, nor Détaille, nor Werner, nor even Verestchagin, I believe, could have thrown on canvas an adequate impression of the awful ordeal which these endless days of pitiless bombardment imposed on our troops. They could have painted you a picture of the British in the trenches running through green fields and pastures and woods, with the wrecks of cottages and churches dotted about the landscape, and the grey ruins of Ypres, seen through bursts of black and white smoke, in the background. They could have shown you our men, unshorn, unwashed, their eyes shining whitely out of their faces, begrimed, burnt by the sun, standing at the parapet firing steadily, or digging, filling sandbags and piling them up to close the breaches rent in the parapet by the enemy's shells bursting on every side. They could have shown you the dead, the pitilessly mangled, the hideously limp victims of the shells; they might have conveyed by a touch of the brush the indifference with which men in the firing-line will pass to and fro before the yet warm bodies of their comrades. They could have shown you the wounded, quiet, dull-eyed, the long processions of the stretcher-bearers dodging their way down to houses and barns and churches and stables, where, under the Cross of Geneva, the doctors were working swiftly and silently, without fuss.

But they could never have conveyed to you the overwhelming, unimaginable truth—that this little sketch of a few yards of trench must be repeated over miles and miles of front, with the same dusty figures at the parapet, the same headless and armless dead, the same suffering wounded, the same rain of shells,

if one would bring home an impression of the second battle of Ypres.

One reads that the endurance of the men was wonderful. But one does not understand. I saw the men who came alive out of that hell in the salient, and they were as men transfigured. Not that they were shaken, depressed, or, on the other hand, exultant. They were just uncannily quiet, sitting about in the sunshine, rather limp, like men recovering from supreme fatigue. Talking to them, one felt somehow that their characters had changed; that they would never look on life again as they had done in the past; that they had acquired a new seriousness of mind, as though their glimpse into the dark valley had sobered them. And they all had a puckered, strained look about the eyes, the look one sometimes sees in men who have spent their lives in the open under a tropical sun. At first these symptoms used to puzzle me. They did after the battle of Ypres. Afterwards I found out that they were the badge of the modern battle, and that, with a week of rest and change of scene, they pass away.

The ruthless bombardment with which the Germans occupied the last days of April were the preliminary to a fresh onslaught on the troops holding the northern part of the salient. In the meantime, the French counter-attacks having made no progress, Sir John French, in accordance with his arrangement with General Foch, decided that he could not afford to hold on any longer to our present exposed position. He therefore gave orders to Sir Herbert Plumer, who was directing the operations of the army engaged in

defending the salient, to fall back upon a new line which had already been prepared in anticipation of this emergency. The effect of the withdrawal was to diminish considerably the arc of the salient, the whole of the centre falling back to a line starting east of Wieltje on the Ypres-Fortuin Road, running across the Ypres-Frezemberg Road south of Frezemberg, cutting through the Ypres-Thourout railway-line, and then the Ypres-Menin Road east of Hooge.

Before the withdrawal could be begun, however—the day was May 2—the Germans, having obtained fresh supplies of chlorine gas in tank waggons from Belgium, launched a gas attack from St. Julien against the 12th and 10th Brigades, which, with the 11th Brigade, were holding the line round this village and down to Fortuin. By this time our men were provided with respirators of a sort, as the result of the appeal made by the army, and magnificently responded to by the women of Britain. Unfortunately the respirators were of rather a rudimentary pattern—they have since been replaced by an entirely efficacious model—and they did not serve wholly to protect our men from the poisonous fumes. Notably the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers and the Essex Regiment got the full blast of the noxious vapours. Despite many acts of individual gallantry shown by officers and men of the Lancashire Fusiliers, they could not hold the trench, and the line was forced back.

It was here that Jack Lynn won the Victoria Cross, conferred posthumously, for this brave fellow did not survive his gallant action. He was in the machine-gun pit when the deadly cloud approached, but with-

out waiting to adjust his respirator he kept his machine-gun playing on the dense billows of greenish-yellow smoke. The cloud caught him and eddied about him, but his fingers never left the button of the gun, which barked on incessantly as the dimly descried forms of the Germans appeared creeping over the open. Choking and gasping as he was, Lynn hoisted his machine-gun on the parapet, and there, amid a storm of bullets, a lonely figure in a trench full of dead and dying, he kept his gun going on the enemy till he collapsed. The German infantry could not face the storm of fire, and returned to their trenches.

Lynn had collapsed by his gun when his comrades found him. They took him to a dug-out, half-conscious, but even then, when a machine-gun started barking near by, that gallant spirit struggled to regain his feet to get back to "his gun." He died there in the sunset, with the din of battle ringing in his ears, only a Liverpool van-boy, "jes' a little bet of a chaap," one of his mates told me afterwards, but a man with a mighty soul.

The 2nd Seaforths were also badly gassed, but with true Scottish tenacity they stuck to their trenches until relief came. It was not long delayed. The Cavalry Division in support sent up the 4th Hussars, who executed a splendid charge side by side with the 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Territorials), who had already done so well at St. Julien. Hussars and Highlanders went forward, head down, through the gas fumes straight into the Germans, ambling to what they imagined was an easy triumph. There was some swift and silent slaying, and the

Germans went back the way they had come with sorely diminished numbers. Said General Hull to me afterwards with a chuckle: " We got the Boches on the hop that time."

Fighting went on all that day and the next. It was essential to conceal from the enemy our withdrawal, which was timed to begin after dark. The continual counter-attacks delivered by these brigades effectually contrived to mask our intentions from him. As a result we were able to withdraw the whole centre of our line and take up the new position we had prepared almost without a casualty, and without the Germans being a penny the wiser. In fact, they continued to pour a devastating fire into our empty trenches until 3.30 on the afternoon following the withdrawal.

The retirement began at 10 p.m. on the night of May 3. The arrangement was that, first, part of the infantry should withdraw, followed after an interval by a portion of the remainder, each battalion leaving behind twenty picked shots to man the parapet and pick off any German that showed himself. It was a most delicate undertaking. The least mistake would have betrayed our move to the Germans. At some places—for instance, at Broodseinde—the trenches were only ten yards apart. Talking and smoking were forbidden. Our men just slipped away in silence through the darkness, the officers hoping in their hearts that they might get away undiscovered.

With a muttered " Good-night and good luck " to the lonely figures left at the parapet, looking out over the dreary expanse between the trenches, where spasmodic flares vouchsafed a glimpse from time to

time of gaping shell-holes, a wild tangle of barbed wire and dead in uniforms brown and green, the first batch of troops silently filed out of the trenches. What a crew they were, with an eight-days' beard, unwashed and unkempt, their faces and uniforms smeared with clay! With that peculiar hitch that Tommy gives to his pack behind when he starts off, they trudged out into the black night, their backs turned to the enemy.

Thus to turn the back on danger and face the unknown, worn out with fatigue and hunger, shaken by the loss of many dear comrades—what a test of discipline! The men were admirable; their officers were magnificent. The success of the withdrawal was, first and last, the work of the Regimental Officer, as those most qualified to speak readily attest. With most of the field officers killed or wounded or gassed, it was primarily the subaltern, the boy fresh from a public school or the 'Varsity, from Sandhurst or the O.T.C., or, in the Territorials, the young clerk or business man, who led his men down over unreconnoitred ground through the rain and the darkness, steeling them against the danger that always threatened by a fine display of nonchalance and good-humour.

Nothing was left behind. All the arms and ammunition and supplies that could not be taken away were destroyed. They tell of a Colonel who did away with a box of kippers rather than let them fall into the hands of the Germans. To his surprise at breakfast the next morning in the new line the kippers appeared on the breakfast-table (an ammunition-box on the

bottom of a trench). The Regimental Sergeant-Major confessed that the sacrifice had been too great. He could not bring himself to take any chance of making a present of the kippers to the Germans. So he had clandestinely rescued them.

At midnight the last men quitted our front trenches, and, going " as they pleased," made off through the pouring rain to rejoin their comrades. A private in the 2nd Cheshires got left behind. He remained at his post at the parapet with a waterproof sheet over his shoulders, firing at intervals at the German parapet opposite him. Presently he noticed that the trench had grown very still. He left his post and went round the adjacent traverse. Nobody there ! He went round the traverse on his other side. Again a vista of empty trench ! He hurried down the trenches for a hundred yards or so, and found that everyone had gone. He was, as he put it afterwards, " left to face the whole blooming German Army alone." He lost no time in joining the retirement.

Many of the wounded of the days of heavy fighting had been taken to the ruined villages of Frezemberg and Zonnebeke, where the doctors tended them by candlelight in the cellars. During the evening, in anticipation of the withdrawal, by hook and by crook, seventy-six motor ambulances were got together. From dusk until half an hour after midnight it had been found impossible to remove a single wounded man, as each would have had to be carried by hand over marshy ground through inky darkness, and without lights, for no lights could be shown. The Germans were shelling both villages heavily, and I

should like to pay a tribute here to the splendid courage of the motor-ambulance drivers who sat imperturbably at the steering-wheel of their cars in the open street and waited for the wounded, with shells falling fast about them.

The evacuation of the wounded at Zonnebeke was the work of Colonel Ferguson, R.A.M.C., and of Major Waggett, R.A.M.C., the throat specialist of Harley Street. Thanks to the untiring devotion of these two officers, every wounded man was safely got away, with the exception of a few men with shattered limbs whom it would have been dangerous to move, and who were left behind with comforts and medicines, and two R.A.M.C. orderlies to tend them. Every man of the R.A.M.C., doctors and orderlies alike, worked like Trojans that night, and added fresh laurels to the rich harvest which the corps has gleaned already in this war.

On our right centre, where the men had stood for days a very heavy bombardment, the troops were very loth to fall back. Some of the men left insulting messages addressed to the "Germs," as they call them, pinned on to the trenches. One man was seen going round "tidying up" his section of trench, "just to leave things clean for the Germs," as he naïvely explained!

The enemy did not let us remain in peace for long. After a few days' shelling, during which it was observed that his 6-inch howitzers were "registering," at 5.30 on the morning of May 8, he made a sledge-hammer attempt to smash in the front of the 5th Corps. He started as usual with a terrific bom-

bardment from north of Passchendaele and from Zonnebeke, which gradually concentrated on the front of the 28th Division between north and south of Frezemberg.

The General commanding this division told me that it was the most terrible bombardment he had ever listened to. The German shooting was marvellously accurate, and their guns simply wiped out our trench line. "This fire," in the blunt phrase of Sir John French's despatch, "completely obliterated the trenches and caused enormous losses."

It was an awful ordeal. The men who came out of it alive told me in awed voices that the shelling was like machine-gun fire, an incessant rain of high-explosive shells that fairly plastered the whole of the ground. The din was ear-splitting, the earth trembled, the air was unbreathable with the fumes from the explosives, and in the space of a minute or two the trenches were reduced to broken heaps of rubbish crowded with dead and wounded men. At one place a trench became impassable with the dead, so the survivors filled it in and planted a cross on top —surely the finest grave for a soldier!

A heavy infantry attack followed the bombardment. It was too much for our men. Some battalions had been for a fortnight in the firing-line without the chance of a wash ("A lick and a promise was all the cleaning up we did," a Colonel of one of these battalions said to me afterwards, "and, by Jove! it was a long promise"), with a scant supply of drinking-water, and salt beef and hard biscuit the only food. Most wires were cut, and the only connection

between the firing-line and the Brigade Headquarters in many cases was by orderly. The gallantry of the despatch-bearers in these terrible days was beyond all praise. They were shot down by the dozen, but there were never lacking volunteers " to have a shot " at getting through when no word had come back from the last man sent back.

Isolated, battered, worn, our men could do no more. The line broke. First it went on the right of a brigade near Frezemberg. It was 10.15 on May 8. Then the centre of the same brigade gave, and then part of the left of the brigade in the next sector to the south. It was here that the Princess Pat.'s Light Infantry, the colours that their graceful patroness had embroidered for them with her initials flying throughout the battle over their regimental headquarters, sustained their trial by fire. Their own Record Officer has given to the world their story of matchless heroism, has told how they held their fire-trench until it was annihilated, then fell back to their support trench, and held it until the Shropshires relieved them, a battered handful, 150 strong. I have seen the peaceful graveyard near Voormezeele where many of the dead of that gallant stand are sleeping, and it was as though the soul of the Empire was beating beneath the rows of white crosses.

North of the Frezemberg Road that Saturday morning the first battalion of the 1st Suffolks trod the blood-stained path to glory. They held out in their trenches under the terrific bombardment and against repeated assaults by the Germans until they were surrounded and overwhelmed. Of the 500 men that

went into action of that gallant regiment, only seven emerged unhurt. North of the Frezemberg Road the 1st Yorkshire Light Infantry, which the army dubs the "K.O.Y.L.I.'s," likewise got a terrible hammering. Supported by a company of Monmouth Territorials, they stayed on till night, when the 12th London Regiment (The Rangers) going up to relieve were practically destroyed by shell-fire, only seventy surviving.

At half-past three in the afternoon a strong counter-attack made by the 1st Yorks and Lancs, the 3rd Middlesex, the 2nd East Surrey Regiment, the 2nd Dublin Fusiliers, and the 1st Warwicks, reached Frezemberg, but was eventually driven back, and finally remained on a line running north and south through Verlorenhoek. The Middlesex lost their Colonel, who, as he fell, cried, in the words of the Middlesex Colonel killed at Albuera: "Die hard, boys!" A charge by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders side by side with the 1st East Lancs towards Wieltje connected up the old trench-line with the ground won by the counter-attack.

May 9 and 10 saw the continuation of the hellish bombardment. The enemy, who had lost heavily on the 8th, notably against the 2nd Essex Regiment, which let a party of Germans come close up to their trenches and then simply wiped them out, furiously attacked the trenches of the 2nd Gloucesters and the 2nd Cameron Highlanders, but were repulsed with heavy casualties. There was ding-dong fighting of the severest description about the trenches on either side of the Ypres-Menin Road, where a gas attack delivered

on the 10th was driven back by the 2nd Cameron Highlanders, the 9th Royal Scots (Territorials), and the 3rd and 4th King's Royal Rifles. The Rhodesian detachment serving with the 3rd K.R.R.'s had their baptism of fire in this fight, and suffered very heavily.

The following day the Germans concentrated their artillery fire on a point a little more to the north, against the 2nd Cameron Highlanders and the 1st Argyll and Sutherland; but the Scotsmen, as tenacious as ever, gave a good account of themselves, though the Germans attacked in force. A brilliant charge by the Royal Scots " Terriers " ejected them from a section of trench in which they had gained a footing. In the afternoon there were two more spells of shelling, each followed by an attack, but the first attack was beaten off, and, though the Germans gained ground in the second, the lost trenches were recovered during the night.

Meanwhile desperate fighting had been proceeding in the northern part of the salient, where, as has been seen, the Germans were making a tremendous effort to smash in our line. A great rambling Flemish homestead, situated west of the Wieltje-St. Julien Road, and called by our men " Shell-trap Farm," was the centre of some of the hardest fighting of the war. The place owed its curious name to the sheer incredible number of shells which the Germans fired into the old red-brick buildings surrounded by a deep, broad moat. At one period 117 shells a minute were counted at this spot. Nevertheless, " Shell-trap Farm " proved too much for the authorities who regulate the nomenclature of places on the map, and a

fiat went forth that the place should be known as "Mouse-trap Farm."

As "Shell-trap Farm," however, it will remain in the memory of the men who fought there. The farm changed hands several times during the fighting, finally remaining in our possession. With its wrecked walls, its shell-pitted front and splintered shutters, and its floors strewn with empty cartridge-cases, it reminds one of the *Maison de la Dernière Cartouche* on the field of Sedan.

The Germans got into the farm, but the 2nd Essex got them out in quick time. The enemy was shelling heavily at the time, but the Essex, advancing "as they pleased," literally dodged the shells and rushed the farm. Theirs was a most inspiriting charge, and the Rifle Brigade, whom they passed on their way up, were so thrilled that they stood up in their trenches and gave the Essex a cheer. Presently the Germans regained possession of "Shell-trap Farm." Then the East Lancs drove them out. By this time the farm and its approaches were a shambles, and the moat was full of dead men.

We held the farm that night. The next morning it was lost again. This time a Territorial battalion—the 5th South Lancs—won it back for us, and kept it. While the South Lancs were in possession a shell came into the farm, and laid out every officer and non-commissioned officer in the place. Thereupon a private sprang into the moat, swam across, and reported the situation to the commanding officer at Regimental Headquarters. The message he took back with him to "Shell-trap Farm" was that the Colonel

hoped the men would hang on. Presently a bandolier was flung out across the moat bearing the Territorials' reply. It ran: "We shall hold out."

The 1st Hampshires beat off one German attack by killing every man that approached within fifty yards of their trenches. They and the men of the 1st Rifle Brigade and the 1st Somerset Light Infantry actually stood up on the parapets and defied the Germans to come on! The London Rifle Brigade, that holds so high a place among the London Territorial regiments, here earned battle honours that in years to come will figure proudly on its colours. They were practically overwhelmed by shell-fire, but stuck to their trenches through it all. They kept sending back cheerful messages to the rear. "Our trenches are irrecognizable," ran one such report, "but we are quite cheerful." When it was suggested to them that it might be as well if they evacuated their trenches, which were falling in on them, the reply was that they would be damned if they would. It was in this fighting that young Douglas Belcher, salesman of Waring and Gillow's, of Oxford Street, won the Victoria Cross by holding a section of trench with a few comrades when the Germans had forced back the cavalry on one side of him. His daring bluff saved our left flank, and his decoration was indeed well earned. But I have anticipated.

The battle was nearing its close. What result had the Germans gained by their unprecedented expenditure of ammunition? By their "unquestionably serious losses"? (Sir Herbert Plumer, quoted in Sir John French's despatch). Certainly they had inflicted

casualties, very heavy, enormous casualties, on us, and had gained ground in the salient, which, however, had exposed us to danger as long as we held it. But they had not broken our line, despite two tremendous blows (those of April 24 and May 8), nor had they in any sense of the word defeated the French or the British armies. Our line was intact. Their effort had failed. No wonder that there has been less written in the German newspapers about the second battle of Ypres than about any other engagement of the war. For this two motives are responsible—the one the desire to hide from the German public the fact that the initial advantage was won by a treacherous breach of the Hague Convention, the second the desire to conceal what must be reckoned tantamount to a German defeat, since the plan of the German Generals was not realized.

On the night of May 12 our line was reorganized, the 28th Division, which on May 8 had undergone such a tremendous ordeal, being withdrawn, its place being taken by two cavalry divisions, dismounted, which, with the artillery and engineers of the division relieved, formed, under the command of General de Lisle, what was known as " De Lisle's Force."

At 4.30 on the morning of May 13 the Germans opened the heaviest bombardment yet experienced in the battle on the trenches occupied by two cavalry brigades on a line running from the Ypres-Roulers railway to the Bellewaarde Lake. The Germans shelled mercilessly the whole triangle between the railway and the lake, while Bellewaarde Wood was enveloped in dense masses of smoke from the bursting

shells. The cavalry trenches were simply obliterated (one of the lessons of this battle is that no trench will stand a really heavy bombardment). The 3rd Dragoon Guards were buried, and though the North Somerset Yeomanry held on with magnificent endurance, the line could not be held, and here we fell back about 800 yards. The Royals (1st Dragoons) were rushed up to reinforce, and suffered heavily on the way. Presently news came back that on the right the Life Guards had been buried in their trenches, and had had to fall back, but that the Leicester Yeomanry were holding out. The 2nd Essex Regiment managed to fill one of the gaps by a fine charge, and held out until relieved by the cavalry supports.

A counter-attack was organized. It was preceded by a very heavy bombardment of the German positions with all available guns firing high-explosive shells. Then—it was 2.30 p.m.—the attack went forward. It was led by the 10th Hussars, who went forward with such splendid dash that at the sight of them the gallant Leicester Yeomanry, reduced in numbers as they were, could not restrain themselves, but tumbled out of their trenches and joined in the rush. The Essex Yeomanry and the Blues (Royal Horse Guards) also took part in the attack. The behaviour of the Blues has been described to me as particularly fine. These magnificent men went forward under a very heavy fire of shrapnel and high-explosive as steady as on parade. The Germans were routed out of the trenches they had won from us. The Germans fairly bolted, in some instances with the cavalry after them.

Our armoured motor-cars, great heavy vehicles, played a part in this counter-attack. It was, I believe, their début in the war. Some of them, under Lieutenant Cadman, dashed down the *chaussées* and opened fire on the Germans in their trenches in the roadside woods. For a little while it was as though we had returned to the war in the open. But the position we had won was untenable.

The trenches were merely holes half filled with dead and débris, and the German shell-fire was pitiless. So our men had to fall back to " an irregular line in rear, principally the craters of shell-holes," to quote Sir Herbert Plumer once more. That night our line remained intact in its former position, with the exception of a small distance lost by one cavalry division. Later the line was advanced, and fresh trenches dug slightly in the rear of the original line, but in a less exposed position.

May 13 may be reckoned the last day of the second battle of Ypres. It is too early to say how many men " went west " in the interval that elapsed between the April evening when we blew up the mines on Hill 60 and the May afternoon when almost for the first time for twenty-six days the inferno of fire abated in the woods and pastures about Ypres. It was not a battle like the first battle of Ypres, when our men met the flower of the Prussian Army face to face, and withstood a succession of onslaughts delivered with an incredible disregard of human life. The second battle of Ypres was a battle of machinery, in which the German infantry skulked behind their gas-cylinders and machine-guns, and waited for their

heavy guns to prepare for them victory at a cheap price.

The moral of the battle, brought home to every man that took part in it, was that the ultimate victory in this war will lie with the nation that best organizes itself to provide its armies with the sinews of war. If at Neuve Chapelle we bitterly felt our shortage of shells, at Ypres we realized even more intensely the enormous advantage which the enemy's superiority in artillery and high-explosive ammunition gave him. The fighting at Neuve Chapelle and Ypres, and later on at the Fromelles ridge, showed us that the principal weapon of modern warfare is the heavy gun, and gave us due warning that the next German attempt to break our line will be preceded and accompanied by an artillery bombardment even severer than that inferno of fire which played for more than three weeks on the Ypres salient, and failed to pierce our front. Artillery fire can only be crushed by artillery fire, so we have our lesson. And because that lesson has at length been learnt, the thousands of Britons who made the supreme sacrifice at Ypres will not have died in vain.

CHAPTER IV

SILENT YPRES

"Et erit sui monumentum gloriosum."
(Epitaph in the ruined Cathedral of St. Martin at Ypres.)

In years to come the name of Ypres will loom large in the annals of our race. Before the war it was known only to a few tourists who, sated with the more familiar art treasures of Belgium, had the curiosity or the time to take the steam tram out from Ostend or Menin to the quaint old city lying in the plain thrust up close to the French frontier. Such visitors had their pains well rewarded (and a two-hour journey by a Belgian steam tram along the flat and dusty Flemish roads merits some recompense). In Ypres they found a perfect jewel of an old-world Flemish city, small and self-contained, well preserved, the two or three principal streets lined with fine old houses with curiously wrought façades, leading to the splendid square, the *Grand' Place*, or *Groote Markt*, as the bilingual street signs proclaimed, where the magnificent Hall of the Cloth-Makers, the far-famed *Halle des Draps*, with its noble tower and majestic front, quite dwarfed the charming Renaissance houses nestling about the square. From

the distant plain the lofty towers of Ypres peeped forth in the summer sunshine above a fringe of greenery. The trees marked the old ramparts of the city, where the burgesses were wont to take the air in the evenings, and where the hearts and intertwined initials cut into the stout old trees still speak, amid the desolation of to-day, of love-making through the centuries.

All the stirring past of Ypres, once wealthiest and most powerful city of Flanders, was outlined in the noble buildings thrusting their heads up out of the undulating plain. Built in a sparsely populated region, there was no city, far and wide, to compare with the beauty, the luxury, and wealth of Ypres. It stood proudly alone, superbly beautiful among ugly surroundings, its ramparts all about, a broad moat where swans glided idly among the water-lilies on the one side, the Yser Canal, bearing trade to Ostend on its sluggish waters, on the other. Ypres feared no comparison with the cities far about. Neither Courtrai nor Menin nor Lille nor Béthune nor St. Omer, nor even Arras, could match with this perfect jewel of old Flemish civilization.

Square and solid to the four winds of heaven, which in winter blow lustily across these mournful plains, stood the Gothic tower of the Cathedral of St. Martin, where Bishop Jansen, most renowned of heretics, sleeps his untroubled sleep in the shadow of the high-altar. Near by rose the massive red-brick keep of the Abbey of Thérouanne, last survival of a powerful and wealthy foundation transferred to Ypres when Elizabeth ruled in England. The lofty

Renaissance roof of St. Nicholas, the graceful spire of St. Pierre, the high fabric of St. Jacques, looked down from other parts of the city on the ancient gabled houses clinging close together in the narrow cobbled streets. The splendid old houses of the Ypres guilds, rich and independent and free, told of the days when the cloth-makers and lace-workers of Ypres were renowned throughout Europe, before pestilence and internal dissension and wars dethroned the city from its high estate.

There was a delightful intimacy in this old-world Flemish city. Even in the names of the streets you saw it—the Street of Paradise, a narrow thread of an opening between two ancient gabled houses with a glimpse of waving foliage at the end; the Street of the Pots, where doubtless the tinsmiths once sat and hammered before their shop-doors; the Street of the Mice, survival of some legend of the Middle Ages; the Street of the Moon, derived probably from a shop or inn sign. A fine old almshouse, with gaudily painted statues in niches on the outside, the *Hospice Belle*, a refuge for old women founded in the days of the Plantagenets by a pious noblewoman of Ypres, Christine de Guines, stood in the Rue de Lille, a perfect background to a Jan Steen or Pieter Brueghel painting. In every street the elaborately decorated fronts and carved doors were silent witness of centuries of prosperity and ease, the fatal fat years that brought ruin to Belgium.

But above all and before all, first and foremost, pride and heart of the city as it was its centre, rose the fair square tower of the Cloth Hall, with its four

richly decorated pinnacles in the Gothic style and great golden clock. The heavy hand of the nineteenth-century restorer, taking his cue from the smug iconoclasts of Victoria and Louis Philippe, had played havoc with the interior rooms, great, lofty halls with fine old wooden roofing. The walls had been decorated with frescoes in the best "Sham Castle" style, illustrating the history of the city. But nothing, not even the modern statues set in niches to replace the statues destroyed by the armies of the *Directoire*, could spoil the majestic harmony, the perfection of line, of the great three-storied façade with its corner-turrets, a vast towering front such as you might have seen nowhere else in the world.

The years that have gone "with the old world to the grave," as Henley sang, swept all the horrors of warfare over Ypres, yet the city survived. Often in bygone days the sky above Ypres had reddened with the flames of the buildings set alight by the conqueror, while the narrow streets ran with the blood of the hapless inhabitants massacred by a ruthless victor. Popular riots, fighting between the nobles and the Guilds, an awful visitation of the Black Death—the same plague that ravaged England in the fourteenth century and affected our entire national life as deeply as Magna Carta itself—and a succession of sieges, destroyed the one-time commercial supremacy of Ypres. Over against the Lille Gate of the city there still stands, amid the rack and ruin of to-day, a humble little house with a gabled front of timber, probably the most ancient building

in the city, that has witnessed most of the exciting happenings of Ypres' storied past: the burning of the outlying parts of the town by the English and the burghers of Ghent in 1383; the devastations of the Iconoclasts, most fantastic of sects, in 1566; the sack of the city by the Gueux in 1578; its capture by the soldiers of Alexander Farnese in 1584; and by the French, who obtained possession of Ypres four times in the seventeenth century and held it until 1715.

Harried by fire and sword, the Ypres weavers fled from their homes, and many came to England, where the so-called Wipers Tower at Rye is, I believe, a token of the hospitality they received in our islands. Now once again, after many centuries, the hand of fate has bound together the threads of England and the ancient Flemish town so close that, as long as England endures, the name of Ypres shall signify a stern ordeal bravely borne and willing faithfulness even unto death.

The graves of our dead, the heroes of the two great battles which raged about this placid city, the dead of the fierce assaults, the daily toll of the trenches, lie in a vast semicircle about Ypres. Ypres was already a sacred name to us, while its towers and pinnacles yet stood, and life pulsated as of old in the congested streets of the quaint old town. Now, in its ruins heaped up in a funeral pyre over the corpses of its hapless civilians slain by German monster shells, it is, more than ever, a fane for ever holy to Englishmen, who in days to come shall know no greater pride than to say, " I was at Ypres !"

It was in the chill wet days of October that our

army first came to Ypres. We had fought the great battles of the Marne and the Aisne, and Sir John French had executed that wonderfully adroit and silent move from the Aisne to the left of the Allied line to hold the Germans off the Channel ports. The Seventh Division, fresh from its ineffectual attempt to save Antwerp—ineffectual because too late—had been placed under Sir John French's orders and was operating eastward of Ypres. Sir Douglas Haig, beloved of Corps Commanders, Sir John French's trusted Chief of Staff in South Africa, was sent to take his First Army Corps through Ypres towards Thourout, with the idea of sweeping the Germans eastward with the help of the French.

Ypres, with its snug houses and intimate streets, must have made a comforting impression on our troops, the war-worn veterans of Mons, the Marne, and the Aisne, as they tramped in from beneath the sighing poplars of the Poperinghe road. The city yet sheltered people when our troops came through; moreover, the 87th French Territorial Division was billeted in the town. How many of the Englishmen, whose eyes were gladdened by the sight of the old-world houses and smiling prosperity of the ancient city, were destined never to return through the Menin Gate, beyond which in the wooded plain the greatest battle of the war was raging! In the churches and convents of the city, particularly in the Chapel of the Irish Ladies of Ypres, where was hanging the British standard captured by Clare's Dragoons fighting with the French at Ramillies, many a prayer went up in those days for the army

fighting so steadfastly without the city against overwhelming odds.

The roads from Ypres radiate like spokes of a wheel. To pass from westward to eastward of Ypres you must go through the city. During the fight all the immense activity of the rear of an army, redoubled in intensity when a battle is in progress, went on in and about Ypres, whose century-old houses, with their red roofs and overhanging gables, will be ever associated with the battle in the minds of those who fought there. For three weeks, while our thin line resisted the mighty smashes of the flower of the German army, the guns drummed almost unceasingly in the distance, and the little motor ambulances came whirring over the uneven cobble-stones of the city, bearing in the wounded to the field dressing-station, an unending procession of pain.

Ypres could not remain unscathed in the battle. Soon the German batteries took the proud towers of the Cloth Hall and St. Martin's for their goal, and amid a rain of shells pouring into the city, the luckless inhabitants, once again after centuries, were compelled to fly for safety out along the bare and dusty road that leads to Poperinghe.

The Poperinghe road! Who of our army in the field that has ever passed along it will ever forget that hideous highway—the road of pain for many, the road of death for many, the road of glory for all? I have traversed it in all weathers and in all conditions, and never have I seen it without a feeling almost of dread, the sensation of treading on ground sanctified by the feet of heroes going to their death.

Straight and ugly and flat, lined with tall poplars with bushy tops, set in the centre with uneven *pavé* worn bright by the wheels of a thousand motor-cars and lorries and carts, the Poperinghe road has been the silent witness of all the vicissitudes of the stupendous struggles which have raged about Ypres. On its polished *pavé* the emotions of a million men have been ground fine by the relentless wheels of the chariot of war. Men have passed along that road into battle, their hearts singing with the thrill of great deeds standing before, and along it have returned from the front pale, silent forms, the Angel of Death their escort—or have returned no more.

I have met them going into action along that road, in the blazing heat of noonday, tramping steadily in the thick dust of the footpath lining the *pavé*, tunics unbuttoned, sweat streaming down their begrimed faces. I have seen them returning, lying very still in the motor ambulances, with the stolid philosophy of wounded men, or else stifling in the ghastly grip of the asphyxiating gas.

Not even 17-inch shells blindly dropped at arbitrary intervals will permanently separate the Fleming from his home. Therefore, as soon as the German bombardment of Ypres slackened, the refugees came streaming back to find a great slice cut out of the tower of the Cloth Hall, the tower and roof of St. Martin's irreparably damaged, and many houses in different quarters of the town considerably battered.

When I paid my first visit to Ypres in March—it was, I remember, during the battle of Neuve Chapelle which was raging far to the south—the city was full

of life. British, French, and Belgian troops were billeted there. There was a fine medley of khaki, *bleu horizon*, as the new powder-blue of the French Arym is called, and the variegated hues of the uniforms of the *braves Belges*. The soldiers had fraternized with one another and with the populace. All the small boys were wearing puttees, all the small girls, and some of the grown-up ones, British Army badges, whilst there appeared to reign a fine spirit of Socialism with regard to the rations of the three armies. Everybody, soldiers and civilians alike, seemed to be subsisting on bully-beef, *singe* (as the French soldier calls his tinned meat), the famous plum-and-apple jam of the British Expeditionary Force, and ration biscuits. English cigarettes and newspapers were for sale in the shops, and here and there on shutters or on doors were inscribed in more or less idiomatic English notices to the effect that washing was done, or that eggs and milk were for sale.

Whether it was the premonition that I should never see Ypres again as a populated city, I know not, but the fact remains that every detail of that brief visit to the city in March remains engraved on my memory. The streets were swarming with soldiers and children. Huge lorries of our Mechanical Transport grunted through the streets; mounted police clop-clopped over the cobbles; the women, lineal descendants of the lace-workers of the Middle Ages, sat at their half-doors, and plied the funny little wooden cocoons by means of which the renowned Ypres lace is made. Only the *Grand' Place*, with the torn tower and gaping roof of the Cloth Hall, and the battered belfry of St. Martin's,

the damaged Lunatic Asylum where a Red Cross hospital was installed, and here and there a roofless house or a shell-hole torn in a façade, remained to tell of the stern struggle which had raged about the city.

I roamed through the empty and battered rooms of the Cloth Hall, and picked up from the floor great flakes of the ugly frescoes which had decorated the walls. I had a perfectly prosaic tea in a little teashop on the *Grand' Place* before motoring away through the crowded streets into the gathering darkness. Thus I left Ypres, peaceful and busy, and, to tell the truth, I think, rather basking in the sunshine of publicity brought to the old place after so many centuries by the historic events of which it was the centre. Two months were to elapse before I saw Ypres again. Then Ypres was dead.

In the smiling country of the Mendips, in Somersetshire, there stands a little village church alone by itself in the fields, remote from the village to which it has given its name. In my schoolboy days in Somersetshire they used to tell me that that church—the name of which has gone from me—was the last survival of one of the villages devastated by the Black Death when it ravaged England in the fourteenth century.

They said, I remember, that the villagers could not plough the fields about the ancient church, for the stones and bricks of the vanished hamlet were still lying just beneath the surface. In later years men had built another village to take the place of that which was dead, but had placed it away from the original site, so that only the little church remained

amid the fallow fields to speak to future generations of a little corner of England razed from the face of the earth.

The picture of that little Somersetshire church came drifting back to me over a long span of years when I went back to Ypres on a sunny morning in May, a week or so after the second great attempt of the Germans, reinforced by asphyxiating gas, to burst their way through to the sea had failed. "*Lucia e morte, la bella Lucia!*" runs the old Italian song. Ypres, beautiful Ypres, was dead, and Death had strewn all the approaches to the city with the hideous emblems of his trade.

From April 24 to May 13 a second great struggle had raged about Ypres, where our line bent out in a wide salient round the city. Ypres was shelled incessantly throughout the battle with artillery of the heaviest calibre, and our reinforcements, rushed up from other parts of the line, met on their way into Ypres the long and melancholy procession of refugees again seeking safety in flight, while the huge German "fat Berthas," as the Boches call their 17-inch shells, exploded noisily in the emptying city.

I remember arriving in Lisbon at three o'clock on a bright moonlit October night on the day following the revolution. The Sud-Express, which brought me down from Paris, was the first train into the Portuguese capital since the overthrow of the Monarchy. The Central Station was battered by artillery fire, the houses in the Avenida da Liberdade were torn and pitted with shell-holes, and the city lay absolutely silent and deserted, the ruins hard and black in the

brilliant white moonlight. Lisbon on that October night is the only city I have seen that even approximately resembled Ypres as I found it on that sunny May morning. Even so the resemblance was fallacious, for the battered corner of Lisbon which met my eyes on my arrival represented practically the whole of the damage done, and the prevailing silence was the silence of night, whereas Ypres was all destroyed, and the silence was the silence of death.

Neither St. Pierre, Martinique, nor Messina, nor Kingston, Jamaica—as I have it on the authority of men who visited those places after their destruction by earthquake, and who have also seen Ypres—produced on the mind such an overwhelming impression as the spectacle of this fair city of Flanders smitten with death all standing as it were. An earthquake or a cyclone will all but obliterate a city, will sweep across it, and leave a vast jumble of ruins in its passage. Bombardment, on the other hand, even the heaviest, will seldom wipe out the line of the streets, and the capricious path of the shells will leave standing single relics that recall in a flash all the beauty, all the intimacy, of the city that has passed away.

The great battle that had raged for three weeks about Ypres had spread on all sides the disorder of war. The warm air was heavy with the stench of dead horses putrefying in the sun, their torn carcasses lying athwart the roads or sprawling in the fields where German shells had rent great holes in the grass or brown earth. The little houses by the roadside—squalid hovels of staring red brick, for the most part—bore abundant traces of the passage of our soldiers to

and from the fight. Here a broken rifle lay resting against the post of a door hanging lamentably on a single hinge and giving a glimpse of wild confusion within—furniture overturned, crockery broken, mattresses disembowelled, with the sunshine streaming in through a shell-hole in the roof. There lay a crumpled khaki overcoat beside a tangled heap of webbing equipment, with empty cartridge-cases scattered around. Heaps of empty shell-cases, ranging from the huge cylinder of the 4·7 gun to the natty little tube of the light field-gun, were piled up in the farmyards where deep wheel-ruts, empty fuse-boxes, and all the litter of batteries, showed where the gun emplacements had been. Here and there I caught sight of a cheerful English face in the little roadside houses. Some of our men were billeted there. Some of the faces were lathered, and a great sound of splashing and a strong odour of fried bacon announced that the breakfast-hour was at hand.

A lonely sentry standing against the wall of a shattered *estaminet*, a dead horse lying in a pool of blood in a gutter, a long vista of empty streets lined with roofless houses, jagged beams projecting into the void, jets of bricks spouted out across the cobble-stones amid charred fragments of furniture, and a silence so absolute, so heavy, that one might almost hear it—this was what the Hun had left of Ypres. Here, indeed, was the tragedy of Belgium, the horror of Louvain, the crime of Dinant. But murdered Ypres, as it seemed to me, cried out more loudly to Heaven for vengeance than her slaughtered sisters. Her destruction had been wrought from afar, the

destroyer could not enter, her citizens had left her, her saviour shunned her. The city was empty, desolate, her toppling walls bending forward as though in grief for her children buried beneath the ruins, for the utter obliteration of five centuries of work and planning to the end of prosperity, happiness, and beauty.

The city lay silent in the sunshine, and a subtle odour of death crept out of nooks and crannies, where swarms of noisome flies danced eternally in the sunbeams. But the air above me was full of noise. Our heavy shells were passing over and about the city with a prodigious reverberating bang that seemed to shake the vault of heaven, followed by long-drawn-out gurgling rushes like the beating of wings of a host of lost angels. Now and then the scream of shells became louder on a different note. Then the sound stopped of a sudden, and was swallowed up in a deafening explosion mingling with an orange flash and a pillar of black or white smoke. Not even dead might Ypres find mercy at the hands of her tormentors. Morning and evening the Germans shelled the empty shell of a city, demolishing the ruins, rekindling fires that had burnt themselves out.

I paid many visits to Ypres. The dead city fascinated me. Every visit was for me a pious pilgrimage to the place of sacrifice of the best of England's sons. The crumbling, battered remnant of the Cloth Hall, the roofless nave of St. Martin's, the ruined houses of the Guilds, the four-square tower of the Abbey of Thérouanne, sliced and rent but not demolished—all these relics of a beauty that was

Flemish were to me Belgium's offering to the memories of the men who had laid down their lives that a great crime might be atoned. Some day, maybe, we shall know how many shells the Germans hurled into Ypres. I know that in all my visits to the ruined city I never found a single house that had escaped unscathed, and I passed through every quarter of the town.

The atmosphere of Ypres was heavy with tragedy. Alone and unheeded I wandered from house to house—ever obsessed with the feeling that I was indecently intruding into another's intimacy—amid the rich *intérieurs* of the old patrician families and the humble surroundings of the small shopkeepers. I rambled through the ancient cloisters of the Belle Hospice, where the exquisite Renaissance chapel had been destroyed save for a single delicate pillar still rearing its head aloft to where God's blue heaven now formed the roof. I roamed through Ypres' ruined churches, where the pigeons were fluttering to and fro over heaps of rubbish that on examination disintegrated themselves into fragments of old pictures, pieces of carved oak confessionals, remnants of *prie-dieu*, all dusted with the fine yellow powder scattered by the German high-explosive shells.

The sacristy of St. Martin's, where the exquisitely embroidered sacred vestments still peeped out of their long, flat drawers, was ankle-deep in this dust. It lay over everything—on the linen sheets enveloping the magnificent copes on their wooden stands, on the Mass missals and vessels, on the old brass candelabra, even on the uniform of the Suisse cast hurriedly in a corner. One day I met an *abbé* who

was seeking to salve what he could of the church treasures. With him was a Carmelite monk. The wizened old *abbé* and the tonsured monk in his brown and white habit dragging old pictures across the ruined square formed a picture that might have come straight out of the Middle Ages.

The fancy took me to see what the bombardment had left of the two museums of Ypres, containing valuable collections of old Flemish pottery and china and prints of the city. The Municipal Museum had been installed in the so-called *Boucheries*, a fine old colonnaded house opposite the Cloth Hall. The other had been housed in an old-world mansion, the Hotel Merghelynck, in the street that the French call the Rue de Lille and the Flemish the Rijssel-Straat, Rijssel being the Flemish name for Lille. Both museums were utterly destroyed. Whether the City Fathers of Ypres had removed the treasures of Ypres to a place of safety before the first bombardment I do not know, but of both museums only the blackened shell remained, the interior piled up high with an immense heap of bricks and charred rafters.

"*Est-ce que mon lieutenant voudrait boire un coup?*" a sour-visaged Belgian peasant asked me in Ypres one morning. The Germans were shelling the city heavily, and I was inquiring as to the danger spots. The peasant was loading a cart with furniture from a big house in the Rue d'Elverdinghe (one of the principal streets), with the assistance of a mate and under the indulgent eye of a Belgian gendarme. These three men, with my companion and myself,

were, I believe, the only human beings in Ypres that day. Standing drinks to strangers is inexpensive in a deserted city where locks no longer serve to imprison bottles in their cellars, and anyway looting is discouraged in the British Army. So, to the speechless amazement of the Belgians, who pointed, with gestures significant of the delights awaiting us, to a large array of ancient, cobwebbed bottles set out on a buhl table, we refused to drink with them. But we went over the house, a treasure-house of old Flemish art, as fine a specimen of a patrician home of the Low Countries as one might wish to see.

The peasants were salving the treasures for the owner, who had fled for refuge to the village of Watou, some twenty miles away. Everything within was in the wildest disorder, and the peasants, with none too tender hand, were piling pell-mell into baskets and crates exquisite specimens of old Flemish pottery, tiles, blown-glass flagons, and wood-carving. I noticed on the floor a lovely old stone drinking-jug inscribed " Iper, 1506 "—the sort of jug you see in a Teniers or Jan Steen painting. This family seemed to have thrown nothing away all through the centuries it had lived in the house. In one room a wonderful collection of old children's toys was scattered about the floor—punchinellos and jack-in-the boxes, with clothes of faded chintz, and little model rooms, complete to the little clock on the wall, enclosed in boxes with glass sides. A shell had come through the roof of the library, a bright and sunny apartment on the top floor, with a charming outlook

on the green surroundings of Ypres, and sent the bookshelves and their contents flying before it went on its way through another room on the floor below and out of the house. Old calf-bound tomes were scattered about the place in a smother of brick-dust.

Disaster sometimes overtook the salvage parties. Whilst dodging shells in Ypres one late afternoon, about the hour of the "evening hate," as our army calls the German evening bombardment, I came upon a large blackened patch opposite the Cloth Hall. As it had not been there on my last visit, I examined it. I did not have to look very closely. The sickening stench of charred human flesh took me by the throat as I approached the patch. A scorched black bowler hat and some fragments of burnt cloth were, with that vapour of the charnel-house, all that were left to show that the remains of a man lay in that horrible heap. There were two charred skulls of horses, some blackened harness chains and calcined parts of a cart. Near by was a jagged lump of cast-iron shell, which lies by me as I write. The cart and horses of one of the salvage parties had obviously been overwhelmed by a shell which, after blowing up driver, horses, and cart, had started a fire which had utterly consumed what the explosion had left.

In past centuries Ypres has been Flemish, French, and Belgian in turn. Whatever her ultimate fate, whether the city be built up again on her ruins or suffered to remain as she is, a perpetual monument of Hunnish malice, henceforth and for all time Ypres will be as British as the impress of the place left on a hundred thousand brains can make it. Wherever

I have been all along our winding line I have been plied with questions about Ypres. "We were there in October." "I was dressed in the asylum there when I got pipped on the Zillebeke ridge." "What about the Cloth Hall?" "Are the cavalry barracks destroyed?"

The British graves in Ypres—but a fraction of the endless graveyards which the defence of the city has filled in the plain and on the wooded slopes beyond the gates—are a further link between Ypres and the Empire. There is a cluster of wooden crosses in the fields over against the asylum, where I have seen orderlies digging fresh graves when I have passed that way. There are graves on the ramparts, old graves hastily dug in the leaf-mould by the shallow trenches thrown up by the French round the city in October, and new graves, the resting-place of men killed in and about the city when the trees were green with this year's summer foliage.

Ypres is impregnated with the memory of the British Army. You will find its cartridges ground into the cobble-stones of the streets, you will find its rations strewn about the floors of the abandoned houses, you will find its billeting directions and inscriptions of all kinds scrawled on doors and walls. As I walked down the echoing streets of ruined houses, amid the ghastly odours of the dead wafted insidiously from choked cellars, with German shrapnel bursting viciously about, sent screaming over from two sides of the salient, I found myself thinking that not the tangible signs of the passage of our army, the abandoned equipment and stores, the simple

graves, but the city itself, burned, battered, and blasted, is the most moving monument to the heroic self-sacrifice of our men. Rent and torn and blackened, " all tears, like Niobe weeping for her children," Ypres, uncaptured still, stands, an indestructible witness to our unbroken line.

CHAPTER V

BILLETS IN THE FIELD

People at home often imagine that our troops *live* in the trenches. They do not. Generally speaking, they live in billets behind the line, and move into the trenches at regular intervals. They take their turn for duty in the trenches like policemen going on their beat. As a rule the procedure is for them to spend a fixed period in the front-line trenches, another period in reserve (living in billets behind the firing-line, which are occupied in rotation by the troops who, in this particular sector, are out of the trenches), and a further period resting somewhere in the rear. The turn for duty in the trenches is therefore something exceptional, requiring a special effort of endurance, for, if there is any liveliness, or, as we say out here, "frightfulness," going, there may be no sleep for anybody for several days and nights on end, something demanding special preparations in the way of supplies of cigarettes and other luxuries likely to drop out if there is any difficulty about getting rations up.

The greater part of the life of our men at the front is therefore spent in billets in our zone of occupation. Naturally, these billets vary enormously. Roofless houses in ruined villages or dug-

outs in the open in a country absolutely devoid of food of any kind are as like as not the sour lot of the troops awaiting their turn of duty in the trenches, though sometimes a village situated at no great distance from the firing-line will provide admirable accommodation for men just out of the firing-line. I dined one June evening with the officers of the famous Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. I found them waiting their turn for duty in the trenches in a positively palatial mansion, the home of a wealthy French merchant of these parts.

I well remember the pride with which they showed me over their quarters. I saw their bedrooms, vast apartments with huge four-poster beds with heavy, old-fashioned *ciels*, and their bath-room, renowned throughout their division—a pleasant, clean, white-tiled place, with three different sizes of baths, as great an array of douches as you would find at a spa, and an apparatus for warming bath-towels. When I thought of other officers I had seen, painfully scrubbing themselves in a few inches of tepid water in a leaky canvas bath in the sordid surroundings of a filthy Flemish farm, I agreed that the " Princess Pat.'s " had every reason to bless the good fortune which had endowed them with a super-bath-room within a few miles of the firing-line.

Before dinner we walked round the garden. It was a kind of St. James's Theatre garden scene, with masses of greenery and banks of flowering plants and great beds of flowers gushing over on to the exquisite stretch of soft green turf. As we strolled they told me of their charming host and hostess.

The latter, it appeared, had given them their best rooms, and had installed for them a special kitchen, where their orderlies might mess about—as orderlies do all over the world—to their heart's content. The model of charity and goodness, this French merchant and his lady wife every morning distributed handfuls of copper to the poor of the place who gathered in long files at their gates. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June the host and hostess, patterns of pious Catholics, sent a message, worded with charming diffidence, to the British officers asking them whether they would care to join in a service of prayer in the private chapel of the mansion. The Feast of the Sacred Heart had been set aside by the French Bishops as a special day of intercession for the victory of French arms. Of course the officers agreed. Presently you might have seen them assembled in the little chapel with the host and hostess and the members of their household, the stalwart forms of the Canadian officers, heroes of the stricken field of Ypres, kneeling in prayer to the God that knows not nations for the triumph of the right. Afterwards the host took his guests down to his little study, and there, in a bottle of his best wine, cobwebbed and reverently handled, the company drank success to the Allied arms.

In the billets near the front our men are birds of passage. One goes up to the trenches as light as possible, so everything that is not essential for the comfort of the inner and outer man in the highly uncomfortable surroundings of the front line is left behind. These squalid ruined houses in the wrecked

villages behind the firing-line are sad places to visit when the battalion returning to them has been in action. There in the common room which the officers use both for messing and for sleeping you may see the kits and personal belongings of officers who will return to that billet no more. You may see letters there addressed to the dead, unopened, expectant, as though waiting to be unburdened of the messages of love and anxious inquiry they bear.

Ah, those empty billets at the front! Their atmosphere is charged with mourning. With what tense expression one sees in the face of men who have been through a modern artillery bombardment. The survivors sit about in silence, seeming almost to resent the presence of the new-comers drafted in from England without delay to take the places of their fallen comrades. This depression, however, is only a phase. It soon passes. Men get used to the loss of their comrades. But if you know them well you will find how hard, how defiant, how reckless it makes them.

A battalion that has "copped it," as the soldiers say, is not allowed to sit about in billets and brood over its losses. For they will brood unless they are stirred up. After Neuve Chapelle Sir John French, going round the battalions that had taken part in that gallant fight, came upon some depleted billets, such as I have described, with the Colonel, one of the few officers surviving, sitting by the fire with his head between his hands, prone to overwhelming grief. The Commander-in-Chief is a man of heart and understanding. He talked to that Colonel as one soldier to

another, and told him that the losses of his fine battalion were the price that had to be paid for victory. Then Sir John had the battalion paraded, and spoke to the men in the same sense.

This war gets you by the heart-strings when you see the awful gaps it tears in the ranks of men who have been closely associated for years. After that fight at Neuve Chapelle, when our losses were heavy, but not so heavy as in fights to come, I lunched with the Rifle Brigade in their billets close behind the firing-line. The battalion had been the first in the village of Neuve Chapelle, and over lunch (out of tin plates in a workman's cottage) the Colonel and the officers gave me a most picturesque account of the Riflemen's sweeping rush into the ruined village, and their adventures in getting the Germans out of the cellars and dug-outs.

It was a jolly meal. Five of the officers were there, beside the Colonel, including the machine-gun officer (formerly the Regimental Quartermaster-Sergeant), who had just got his commission. Three months later I lunched with the Colonel again. He had by that time become a Brigadier. Of all that merry luncheon-party, only he and the machine-gun officer (now a Captain with the Military Cross, and promoted Brigade Machine-Gun Officer) survived. The other three were dead, killed within a few hours of one another on the Fromelles ridge. The survivors at luncheon that day spoke of them with infinite affection, with obvious regret, but without any lamentation. Death has another aspect out here. It is often the matter of a fraction of an inch. One friend is

taken and the other left. And the survivor "carries on," only in his heart wondering "Why he and not I ?"

Our men make longer stays in the billets situated farther away from the front than in those which are merely the jumping-off place for the trenches. Some of the cavalry spent months on end in the same billets, cursing this horseless war and chafing at their inaction. From time to time they took their turn in the trenches, and played their part manfully, as at Ypres on May 13, when the flower of the cavalry suffered cruel losses from a terrible German bombardment. But for the most part they carried on what was practically peace training in conditions which were depressing and monotonous to the last degree.

Thus I fell in with a crack Hussar regiment billeted in some farms well off the main road. Their billets were so remote that it took me a good hour to locate them. After inquiring successively from two privates in an *estaminet*, a farrier-sergeant playing ball with a small girl in a courtyard, and a battered-looking young subaltern riding down the road, a long, low farmhouse with a red-tiled roof, built round three sides of a yard in which a duck-pond, a dung-heap, and several enormous pigs were the outstanding features, was pointed out to me as the officers' quarters. I sidestepped the dung-heap, skirted the pond, and, dodging the pigs, banged on the door with my riding-crop. "*Entrez !*" shouted someone within, and I entered the mess of the 3rd Hussars.

"Mess" summed up the scene rather well. Of the four or five officers in the room, most were lying, the picture of boredom, on sleeping valises which lined the walls of the long, low-pitched room. A table on trestles in the centre was piled up with maps, field-glasses, cigarette-tins, magazines, a mass of Sam Browne belts, a Sparklet bottle, a tin of shortbread, and some flowers in a shell-case. The stone floor was thick with mud, brought in fresh that morning, as the boots of the officers present certified.

I was rapturously received. One of the chairs was cleared of its contents. On shouts of "Orderly," a door in the corner opened, and a strong smell of frying and a greasy-looking soldier in a grey army shirt and khaki trousers emerged simultaneously. He brought glasses and a bottle of local beer; the box of cigarettes was produced, and then I was ordered summarily to tell the company what was happening at home and at the front. Was America coming in? And Italy? (This was before Italy's intervention.) What were they going to do with that fellow, Ramsay Macdonald? They heard nothing, nothing, where they were. Were the cavalry *never* coming into action in this dam-fool hole-in-the-ground war? They might be at Shorncliffe for all they were seeing of the war. . . .

Would I come round the horse-lines before lunch? The man I had come to see, a Captain, conducted me via the dung-heap, the duck-pond, and the pigs to an orchard where the horses of this squadron were picketed in a sea of mud. It was a sad, weeping

morning, like a spring day in Ireland. The horses looked very fit despite the wet winter they had passed through. "Mind that little 'orse, sir," said a grizzled old private as we passed. "Rather a character, that man," said my friend: "re-engaged; typical old soldier; regular scamp. Talk to him."

He was a wizened little man in the forties, with a horsy manner, and had been all through the retreat from Mons. Only one of his remarks has stuck in my head. I was asking him about the food. He was pleased to be very well satisfied with the efforts of the A.S.C. on his behalf. "No one ain't got no cause to grumble," he said, "and that's the truth. You gets yer grub reg'lar, and that's more than a lot of them in this army did before. Of course"—with fine sarcasm—"there is some as wants stewed apples and custard ev'ry day for dinner, and there's no pleasing the likes of those. No, sir, the food's all right."

By the time we returned to the farm-house the table had been cleared and set with a number of tin plates, a loaf of ration bread, and some tin cups. It was a rough meal, there is no denying the fact. There were sardines as *hors-d'œuvre*, some very tough roast beef, and potatoes, and some tinned apricots and boiled rice. We washed it down with very strong tea and condensed milk out of the aforesaid tin cups. "D'you mind tea?" asked my host apologetically. "We mostly have it for lunch." I did not mind a bit. But I wondered idly to myself what the 3rd Hussars would have said if, a few months previously, you had suggested tea for lunch in their elegant mess at home!

Puck, in his most mischievous mood, never conceived anything more glaringly inappropriate than the British soldier in billets in France. Probably no greater contrast could be found than, on the one hand, the French peasant, working from daybreak to nightfall, scraping and stinting and saving to realize a profit where he can, to add a franc or two to his *bas de laine*, and, on the other, the British soldier—who receives about the same wage as a farm-hand in this part of France, unless he is in the Mechanical Transport, when with 6s. a day he is far better paid than the curé or the village schoolmaster—wasteful, liberal-handed, as thriftless about money as he is about food. Without warning the two are flung together. Suddenly they are called upon to live together on a footing of the utmost intimacy.

To know a man you must live with him. That is how the North of France has got to know the British soldier. After making due allowance for English madness—*spleen*, the French call it—the peasant has discovered the British soldier to be the most easy-going of lodgers, whose liberal allowances in the matter of rations and broad ideas about money enable all manner of small transactions to be arranged of advantage to the host and his cronies in the village, who is always ready to do odd jobs about the house, who is a kind of nurse to the children, who is, in short, the best of fellows imaginable. This is all to the credit side. On the debit side there is the British soldier's unaccountable and inexplicable mania for washing himself, requiring quantities of clean cold water that appear positively incredible in comparison with the

small jugful which suffices for the ablutions of the host and his entire family.

The German comic (God save the mark!) press loves to portray the "savage" British soldier "preying" on the North of France, to the despair of the unfortunate French peasant, abandoned to the clutches of the wicked English by an unscrupulous Government of Paris Chauvinists. In reality the "unfortunate" French peasant in these parts is living on British rations, and making more money than ever before in his life. In all the villages about our line the boys and girls of all ages are wearing British Army badges. I met a cowherd once who was wearing a most unmistakable pair of British khaki riding-breeches. I lunched one day at an hotel in a town in our zone where British ration bread was served at the *table d'hôte*. The hostess noticed the query in my eye, and hastened to explain: "*C'est un officier anglais qui loge chez nous et qui demande, comme ça, que l'on lui sert de son pain à lui.*" That might pass for the bread, but the soft sugar had specks of black in it, those flakes of tea which you will always find in British ration sugar. I said no more, but paid without a murmur three francs for the worst meal I have ever eaten in France.

It says much for the tact of our army in the field that it has wielded the wide powers conferred on it with the utmost loyalty by the French, *vis-à-vis* the civilian population, without any friction. In all the towns and villages of our zone of occupation you will see printed notices signed by "*Le Général Commandant la —— Armée Anglaise,*" or "*Le Capitaine* A.P.M."

Underwood & Underwood phot.

BILLETS IN THE FIELD: THE BRITISH SOLDIER AND HIS PEASANT HOSTS.

(Assistant Provost-Marshal), with directions for the closing of cafés and *estaminets* at a fixed time, and the hour by which the civilian population must be indoors. In most places the sale of spirits to the British Army is absolutely prohibited. If an *estaminet* offends in any way against these regulations, the British authorities have power to close it—a power that is often exercised. There is no direct intercourse between the British military authorities and the civilian population, however. The French *officiers de liaison* attached to the different armies and corps and the Mayors act as go-betweens. Things work very smoothly by this arrangement, which removes the disagreeable possibility of our military authorities having to exercise direct pressure on the French civilians. Billeting and requisitioning are worked on similar lines, and there is a Claims Commission which, in consultation with the French, deals with the redemption of requisitioning receipts and claims for indemnity for damages, etc.

The rank and file of our army that went to Mons knew practically only two words of French, apart from *Wee wee* and *Nong*, French words familiar to every Britisher since the days of Boney, and those were *souvenir* and *bong*. The British Army increased its French vocabulary by these two words in the course of its triumphal progress from the sea coast to the interior through villages *en fête*, where the peasants loaded the troops with good things of every description, asking only in return a badge as a *souvenir*. That is why most of our men went into action badgeless, and the giving away of badges

had to be prohibited. That is why to-day, when you see a man with the initials of his regiment written in faded ink on his cap in default of a badge, you may know almost to a certainty that that man went through the great retreat.

The British Army has improved its acquaintance with the French tongue since those early days of the war. It has, indeed, contrived a kind of *lingua franca* as a vehicle of speech between itself and its hosts in the billets. The vocabulary is small, being in the main restricted to articles of food and drink. Grammar is a negligible quality, and the accent varies from the clipped speech of North Britain to the broad burr of the West of England. The French being reputed a race which sets great store by politeness, *sivvoo-play* is freely tacked on to all sentences in conversation with the natives. The difficulties of the modification of the definite article are simply abridged by prefixing to the substantive *doo* (*du*). Thus, milk is *doolay*, bread *doopong*, water *doolo*, wine *doovang*. Jam, indispensable adjunct to all meals of our army in the field, has, as every schoolboy knows, no exact equivalent in French, for the simple reason that the French seldom eat jam except in the form of a kind of fruit jelly which they call *confiture*. But the British soldier never hesitated. The army slang for jam is, I believe, *poz* or *pozzie*, so jam became *doopoz*, and was speedily recognized by the natives under that form.

The peasants on their side have fallen into a kind of pigeon French, accompanied by a good deal of simple gesture, which, even with the most elementary

vocabulary, is extremely easy to understand. As the population of the region of France abutting on the Belgian frontier speaks Flemish as well as French, the peasants in some parts of our line are able to draw on Flemish (which has many words resembling English) to supplement their vocabulary in talking with *les solgaires*, as they call them. The children, with childhood's ready ear for languages, pick up English from our men extraordinarily fast. The ragged urchins who sell the London newspapers at G.H.Q. (General Headquarters) every evening have gathered quite a lot of English one way and another, though, I must say, some of their expressions savour very strongly of "our army in Flanders."

Our men, too, are very quick about French. On Sunday afternoons in the villages in the rear you may see Mr. Atkins going for a quiet stroll with his host in billets, some gnarled old peasant, and carrying on quite an animated conversation with him about the crops and what not. The mess orderlies at G.H.Q. are wonderful. On market-days they are to be seen in the Grand' Place, baskets on their arms, haggling away as fluently as may be in French with the old women selling butter and eggs and fish and fruit.

Our army in the field has a fine sweeping way with the pronunciation of the names of places in its zone of occupation. *Wipers* and *Plug Street* are classical and well-known examples of the phonetic adaptation of such names. In many cases a place, as pronounced by our men, is instantly recognized when seen in print, a fine tribute to the correctness

of their phonetics. Often their pronunciation is a very close imitation of what the name of the place sounds like in the mouth of a Flemish boor. "Wipers" is astoundingly near the Flemish pronunciation of Ypres. In the same way *Gertie-wears-velvet* is an almost perfect phonetic rendering of *Godewaersvelde,* and easy to remember at that. I have amused myself by keeping a little list of the pronunciation by our army of some of the names familiar to them in our zone of operations:

Armentières	Arm-in-tears.
Haverskerque	Haversack.
Reninghelst	Running Hold.
Festubert	Fest-Hubert.
Etaples	Eatables.
Lumbres	Lumbers.
Hinges	(As in English).
Vieux Berquin	Viooks Berkwinn.
Potijze, or Potyze ..	Pottidjy.
Wytschæte	White Sheet.
Cuinchy	Quinchey.
Hazebrouck	Azebrook.
Beuvry	Bouvry (as in Bouverie Street).
Haltebast	Hell-and-Blast.

The amusing thing is that the whole army has adopted this nomenclature. You will hear Staff officers who know French well speaking of "Arm-in-tears" and "White Sheet." With the Expeditionary Force it is "the thing" to do as the army does.

There is no doubt that our men were very uncomfortable both in the trenches and out during the long wet winter in Flanders. Even after a dry spell in the summer a heavy shower sufficed to turn the roads and paths and communication trenches about

the firing-line into regular quagmires. But the warm air of a perfect summer, when the sun is never long absent, puts a different complexion on everything. The quagmires dry up, the hot sunshine evaporates the moisture in sodden garments, and the exquisite garb in which summer clothes these Flanders flats, so gloomy and repelling in winter, quickly restores depressed spirits.

In its summer dress Flanders indeed is very fair. Behind the firing-line the wind and the birds have done the work of man. The fields are all asway with wheat and barley and oats, sprung up of themselves, splashed with great stains of scarlet and blue where poppies and cornflowers nod in the breeze. Nature has scattered with a liberal hand these most English of flowers, suggestive of all that is most beautiful in the English countryside, wherever the sappers' pick has thrown up the clods of earth, be it from a trench, be it from a grave. In the little gardens about the shattered homesteads, where abandoned equipment, ends of hospital dressings, scattered cartridges, and empty ammunition boxes tell of the war that has passed that way, the scarlet ramblers still scramble with flaming petals athwart the blasted walls, in and out of the empty window-frames. The red roofs of the farms nestling in masses of swaying greenery, the roses in the village gardens, the blooming hedgerows—all this is the beauty of summer England, surest cure for home-sickness and ennui.

Very wisely the military authorities out here have always encouraged the playing of games by the men in their periods of recreation. They have recognized

that games keep the men physically fit, and also take their minds off the dangers and hardships of their life at the front. Games keep the men from brooding over the perils they have escaped as over the dangers that may stand before. Games keep them out of mischief, from loafing about the villages and clandestine drinking, which so often leads to unreflected acts. It is in no spirit of frivolity, but in the spirit of the old maxim, "*Mens sana in corpore sano*," that our men while away their leisure hours with cricket and football and sing-songs. I am anxious to reaffirm this, to all Englishmen, self-evident truth because (there is no object in cloaking the matter) the French have shown at times a tendency to be scandalized at the recreations of our army in the field. As time has gone on, and they have come to know us even better than before, they have begun to understand that the Englishman, in taking his games with him into the field of war, is only carrying on our great system of national hygiene which has turned out all our great fighters of history from Francis Drake to the Grenfells.

Therefore, fair weather or foul, our army in the field contrives to amuse itself in its leisure hours, sparse though they may be. In winter it played football. The ground was always rough, and sometimes pitted with shell-holes. Four of the black and white posts which the signallers use for laying their field telegraph wires served as goal. But the ball was tight and firm, blown up by some kindly A.S.C. driver with his tyre-pump, the players were hard and keen. I have seen many a good game played not a

"Daily Mail" photo.

CRICKET AT THE FRONT.

mile behind the firing-line, always liable to be disturbed by sporadic outbursts of German "frightfulness."

Summer brought cricket and rounders. Real cricket bats were seldom seen, but quite a serviceable substitute can be fashioned out of a packing-case, which will also supply both stumps and bails. With a composition ball and willing and eager fielders many excellent games were played in all kinds of surroundings, on every imaginable—and unimaginable—sort of wicket. A brigade of the Indian Cavalry had a rounders team of which great things were said. The Machine Gun School introduced badminton. The war correspondents' mess invented a weird kind of pseudo-cricket played with a broomstick and a soft ball.

During the winter two concert parties had a great vogue. The one, "The Follies," was run by the 4th Division, and consisted of army talent assisted by two charming young ladies, one a refugee from Lille, the other, I believe, a daughter of an *estaminet* keeper at Armentières, where "The Follies" performed several times a week for months. I never heard them, but I am told that their "show" was excellent, and attracted spectators from far down our line. The *pièce de résistance* was, I believe, the singing of "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts for Soldiers" by the young female refugee, a considerable feat if you remember that the young person did not know a word of English. Most of "The Follies" are dead by now, killed in action in the spring. Thus does cruel war break up pleasant partnership. The two

young ladies were absorbed in the second concert party, " The Fancies," which also had a successful career.

In an existence which, save for the spells of fighting, is comparatively monotonous, the weekly baths arranged for the men are quite an event. The danger of vermin as the transmitters of disease aroused the medical authorities, at an early stage of the campaign, to the necessity of providing regular bathing facilities for the men in the firing-line. The numerous large buildings in this part of France afforded ideal wash-houses, and " bathing-stations," as they are called, are now established in all divisional areas. Here, while the men are enjoying a good scrub-down with plenty of soap in huge vats and tubs filled with hot water, their uniform is disinfected and their soiled shirts, underwear, and socks are replaced by clean ones. On bathing days, which are mostly every day, these bathing-stations are a sight that does the heart good, so delighted are the men to get their bodies clean, to have the feel of clean underwear next their skin. If needs be, the British soldier will put up with any amount of discomfort. But the discomfort he resents most of all is to be deprived of his soap and water. " Cleaning up " morning and evening is as much a rite with our army in the field as the morning and evening prayer of the Moslem.

The installation of these bathing-stations was the idea of a young officer of the R.A.M.C. It frequently happens in our army in the field that, if a man happens on a good idea, he is told to go " ahead with it." This young doctor's idea was a very happy

one, and he " went ahead with it " to such good purpose that it was copied, and, as I have said, " bathing-stations " were arranged throughout the army. They are now show-places to which the distinguished visitor is invariably conducted. It is whispered that sometimes, when these visits have been arranged at short notice, bathers are not available, so a squad of men, who perhaps had had their bath the day before, are ordered to the bath and are solemnly washed again. Though perhaps on these occasions the clothing and bodies of the men seem surprisingly clean, the visitors to the " star " bathing-station, where personages of note are always conducted, can see " the real thing " in the shape of a lamentable garment preserved between two sheets of glass. It is known as " The Lousy Shirt," and is an indisputably genuine relic of winter, literally covered with the cremated remains of hundreds of this most unconventional insect. The doctor in charge of the bathing-station declares his intention of presenting the shirt to the United Service Museum after the war.

In many parts of the line, where the German rarely desists from " frightfulness," the troops waiting their turn in the trenches live entirely in dug-outs, as such houses as are still standing are not safe owing to shell-fire. A dug-out is, as its name implies, a shelter scraped out of the ground, the earth being laid on timbers placed crosswise on top. A dug-out will afford adequate cover against bullets and shrapnel and splinters of shell. It will not as a rule, unless quite exceptionally solid, resist a direct hit by a shell

If a dug-out is struck fair and square in this way, its occupants seldom escape. Some of the dug-outs I have seen were models of neatness and ingenuity. One in particular, used as regimental headquarters in a village that had been totally destroyed—the 2nd Worcesters, the heroes of Gheluvelt, were there when I visited it in June—was reached by a neat flight of wooden steps and had practicable casement windows. Walls and roof were papered in an artistic shade of green, linoleum was on the floor, a mirror and coloured prints of General Joffre and Sir John French hung on the walls, and there were tables and chairs in addition to a camp-bed in a corner. A pigeon-hole with a slide in one wall gave access to a second room, " the office." The place was dry and well ventilated. It had a great local reputation as the " super-dug-out." A framed notice on the wall proudly attested the fact that it had been visited by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

Round about Ypres, where the country has been laid waste by shell-fire, everybody lives in dug-outs.

When up in the Ypres salient one day I ran across an old friend in the person of the C.O. of the 16th Lancers. He and his officers were living in dug-outs constructed in the grounds of a ruined country house. I reminded him that the last time I had seen him had been in the very handsome dining-room of the 16th Lancers mess at The Curragh. Then he was wearing the red and gold mess-kit of " The Scarlet Lancers." Now he was in the worn and stained khaki, plastered with mud from top to toe, with a disreputable old cap with ear-pieces and

monstrously heavy boots. "Perhaps you'd care to have a look at our mess here," he said, and pointed at a black hole in a mud-bank a few feet away. Outside some facetious orderly had affixed a notice-board inscribed "Hotel Ritz," with various light-hearted remarks to the effect that it was licensed for the sale of beer and wines to be consumed on the premises.

This dug-out was what it purported to be, a hole in the ground, muddy and damp and depressing. At the back several sleeping-valises lay on the ground. There was an elegant table and some chairs, white-enamelled, with turned legs. "The table's got a marble top," said a sad-looking Major sitting there, "like the tables at the Carlton!"

I have visited troops in their billets in every part of our line. I have been to headquarters installed in fine old châteaux, with which I deal in a subsequent chapter; I have lunched with Brigadiers quartered in hovels so mean and filthy that they would disgrace the lowliest cabin of the West of Ireland; I have sat and chatted with sappers living in holes scraped out of the sides of a bank like kingfishers' nests; I have seen our soldiers living in wooden hutments and under canvas; I have seen them in grubby little workmen's cottages in suburbs of the industrial towns of the North of France and in dreary, rambling old French barracks. Sometimes they were comfortable (and the British soldier is able to make himself comfortable on astonishingly little!); generally they were uncomfortable. But they never grumbled at their rough lot. They groused about

their inaction and bemoaned their hard fate at not being able to "get a crack at the Germs." By no single word, however, did they indicate that they regarded their conditions of life as anything exceptional, anything outside the great game in which they are engaged. The army does its best for them. Their food is plentiful, extraordinarily varied, seeing the difficulties of transport, and absolutely regular in every part of the line. The army gives them, amongst other things, cigarettes and tobacco and matches and newspapers. As my Hussar said, the A.S.C. does not run to "stewed apples and custard." It cannot give them houses always; it cannot give them family life; it cannot protect them against the dark angel that stalks these Flanders flats by day and night. But it smooths things as best it can, and for the rest the cheerful philosophy of the British soldier "carries on."

CHAPTER VI

CASTLES IN FLANDERS

With the British, as with the French and German armies in the field, you will sometimes find Headquarters Staffs housed in a château. A Staff wants plenty of elbow-room, it wants quarters away from the noise and dust of the high-road and the bustle of a town; it has to choose a fairly secluded spot, so as to escape the vigilant eyes of enemy airmen and the bombardment which inevitably follows detection. This word château is very misleading. It is what you might call a " portmanteau " word. It signifies not only the Alexander Dumas type of medieval castle; it also means practically any large house standing in its own grounds. Thus, when I have set out to find the Headquarters of the Nth Division in the Château of Blancques (B 13 c., or some similar hieroglyphic, marking the spot on the Staff maps, will be the address given to me at General Headquarters), I have never known whether I shall find the Divisional General living amid the picturesque surroundings of a real old French château, with slender grey turrets, and lichen-covered walls, and a black and shining moat, or amid the stucco and red brick, the pitch-pine and stained glass, of some preposterous mansion

built by a retired merchant on the outskirts of an industrial town.

When I think of this war in years to come, however, I feel that I shall always see some of its incidents re-enacted against the idyllic background of one or other of the ancient châteaux of this part of France. There is little enough picturesqueness, Heaven knows, in this most business-like of wars, but there is an undeniable touch of romance in the scenes which take place in and about these fine old castles in our zone of occupation. I always came upon them with a feeling of surprise, these old châteaux, in a country that with its smoke-stacks and mine-shafts speaks of anything rather than of old-world romance. They are mostly tucked away behind a screen of trees, to shelter them from the icy winds which blow across these melancholy Flanders flats in winter; they are almost always surrounded by a moat, and stand in their own grounds, which remain in their natural state, with wide stretches of short grass interspersed with wild flowers between groups of fine old trees.

These grand old houses, which have witnessed so many stirring scenes of war in the past, were awakened from many years of slumber by the arrival of our army in the North of France. The little stumpy bridges across their moats, which had re-echoed under the hoofs of horsemen in the armies of *le Roi Soleil;* the tall, pointed turrets which had seen in succession the cocked hats of *le grand Marlbrook's* infantry; the ragged bonnets of the Revolution; the beplumed busbies of Wellington's cavalry, filing along

the white roads threading the distant plain, were once again the silent witnesses of the bustle of an army in the field. A slender pennant was affixed to the lichen-covered gate-post; sentries in khaki, stolid, slow-moving, rifle with fixed bayonet at the "Order arms," materialized apparently out of nowhere; motor-cars came whirring up, discharging lean, athletic-looking officers in caps of red and gold; while motor-lorries unloaded themselves of stacks of papers and maps and stores and sleeping-valises and kit-bags. A party of extraordinarily energetic people took possession of stables or an outhouse, or some building conveniently adjacent to the château, and decorated roof and walls with telegraph and telephone wires, and set up a pole flying a blue and white flag over against a fair fret-work sign, "R.E. SIGNALLERS." To the Signallers' station presently began to arrive the motor-cyclist despatch orderlies in a frantic fuss of noise and a cloud of dust.

The old châteaux hardly knew themselves again in all this activity. Northern France is so eminently industrial that one had forgotten that it had its relics of the old nobility of France as well, though many of the ancient châteaux had passed into other hands, and some were seldom if ever inhabited at all save by the caretakers and a few old servants.

So the old places awoke. *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* appeared where formerly the *Figaro* and *La Croix* (pillars of the old French nobility) were seen; the *Winning Post* found itself side by side with *The Lives of the Saints* (in thirty-eight volumes in

calf); and pictures of charming young ladies cut out of the *Sketch* or *La Vie Parisienne*, particularly Rudolphe Kirchner's delightful sketches from the latter, were pinned up on the walls next to family portraits of dead-and-gone châtelains and châtelaines. The green tree-frogs, sprawling lazily in the sunshine among the sedge on the surface of the moat, leapt away in high indignation at the invasion of their realm by noisy young men with bath-towels. The rooks in the plantation cawed in raucous protest against the thin blue curls of smoke arising from the camp-fires of the troops bivouacked among the oaks and beeches, singing, hammering, rattling tins, and jesting from dawn to dark. The birds watched in amazement men-folk doing work they had been wont to believe was the prerogative of rabbits and moles, scraping deep holes in the ground, roofing them with timber, and thatching them with leaves, and vanishing therein when blasts on a whistle heralded the approach of the curious new birds recently noticed in the sky, birds that glittered whitely far up among the clouds and droned angrily like a giant bumble-bee.

I have seen many striking contrasts in these châteaux of France. One day I turned into the courtyard of as dainty a little château as ever the fifteenth Louis of gallant memory built for a lady. It was one of the country places of a French officer then at the front, and very rarely visited by him. Its grounds were neglected, the iron gates were rusted and broken, and the stonework running round the flat and shallow fish-pond was hoary and cracked

with age. Against a superb background of green foliage, a mighty screen of poplars bordering a drive that ran out to the blue horizon, a horseman sat on his horse, turbaned, a lance at his stirrup, immobile, a sublime equestrian statue. It was an Indian sowar, a Pathan trooper of the native cavalry. He sat perfectly still in the sunshine, in the silence that was Pompadour France. . . .

Again, I remember calling at a château to get a pass to visit a certain part of our line. It was a hybrid kind of place. The old part of the château had been caught up and surrounded, as it were, in an imposing pile of new red brick. On the lawn in front ran a lean fragment of old grey wall, along which the scarlet rambler climbed recklessly, profusely, in and out of the castellated coping and athwart a broken arch. Two motor-cyclist despatch-riders sat on the lawn beneath a giant walnut-tree and tinkered with their cycles. In the distance the guns drummed gently, continuously. A young man came strolling across the lawn. He was an officer. His khaki tunic and breeches and puttees had seen hard service, his cap was thrust back from his forehead. In his hand he carried a sheaf of papers, with which he returned, rather punctiliously, the salute of the two motor-cyclists. As he passed me I saw it was the Prince of Wales.

He passed into my vision briefly that day and passed out again, very slim, still a little diffident, in the pink of condition, as he passes to and fro in the midst of our army in the field, restless when he is held back too long from the front, happy only when

he feels that he is sharing the dangers and hardships of the army. The Prince of Wales with the army in France! What a fine suggestion there is about the phrase! It kindles my imagination every time I see him there with the troops. Possibly the grey old tower of that modernized château which watched him strolling nonchalantly across the grass that morning had also looked down upon his most famous ancestor, him whose sable armour, once famed in France, you may see to this day in the Cathedral at Canterbury.

This region is rich in association with our fighting past. I spent a morning once with a Headquarters Staff in a château where Marlborough (who has left the impress of his magnetic personality so deeply stamped on the French imagination) had stayed when he was conducting his operations against Marshal Villar's famous *Ne Plus Ultra* lines. A quiet, reposeful spot was that château, with a rococo atmosphere, with panelled rooms and old furniture, and gold-framed portraits of military men of a past age. In a little study on the ground-floor, where "Corporal John" may have worked himself, a General explained to me over a table spread with maps his hopes and ambitions for the coming summer. Outside a Staff Officer was explaining the working of a trench mortar, the invention of one of the officers quartered in the château; others were talking of the fishing they had managed to get in the neighbourhood. Mortars and fishing! As subjects of conversation they were as topical in the times of "the army in Flanders" as to-day.

One day I picked up a thread which conducted me

straight back to Waterloo. It was in an old château I found it, an exquisitely preserved gem of the early seventeenth century, with a pigeon-coop, emblematic of seigneurial rights, and a dainty little flower-garden, a perfect corner of old France which, as a contemporaneous print hung in one of the rooms of the château attested, had not changed its appearance since it was laid out when the château was built. In this château Grant's Brigade of cavalry, which fought at Waterloo, was quartered for two years after the battle. The place was still redolent of the memories of the British cavalry which, as part of the army of occupation of the Allies after the overthrow of Napoleon, had been quartered in the château and in the little township which surrounds it. In the outer wall of the stables they showed me a row of rings affixed there for the horses, a hundred years ago, by the men of the 15th Hussars who were in Grant's Brigade. In and about the little town surrounding the château, on the occasion of my visit, I met again men of the 15th Hussars quartered there—the 15th Hussars of to-day, gallantly carrying on the great traditions which their forbears at Waterloo helped to establish.

These ancient châteaux in our zone of operations often change their occupants. A Staff moves on and disappears, and before the old house has had time to relapse into its secular sleep there is another irruption of " brass-hats " in motor-cars and mess orderlies in motor-lorries.

The General Staff room is generally established in the largest room of the château. I have seen some

curious contrasts in these rooms. I have in mind a long and lofty apartment with a broad alcove made by a story of one of the corner turrets of the château. On the walls old-fashioned oil-paintings hung side by side with innumerable maps, army orders, and various indications, serious and facetious. A Staff Officer was sitting at a big old oak table spread with an extraordinary collection of mud-stained papers. This was the Intelligence Officer going through correspondence found on German prisoners and dead. In the alcove another Staff Officer was talking on the telephone to a Brigade Headquarters; sandbags was the theme, and its discussion developed a certain amount of acerbity as it proceeded. A young man in very muddy riding-boots stood by the handsome carved-stone mantelpiece, his cap on the back of his head, a riding-crop in his hand. He was waiting with some impatience for the sandbag debate to finish.

In its outward appearance the room was a blend of suggestions of peace and war. There were touches of the boudoir, the bureau, and the barrack-room in the furniture. One or two dainty *bergère* chairs, a work-stand, a pretty cabinet or two, spoke of some feminine influence that had once reigned here; the typewriters, the telephone, suggested the city office; while the barrack-room touch was provided by the Sam Browne belts, the revolvers, the riding-crops and swagger canes which were scattered about in the corners and on the tables and chairs.

Life in these châteaux is not always so peaceful as their appearance would indicate. Not so very long

ago I was having tea in a château with a Headquarters Staff, and the very tea-things on the table rattled with the continual air-percussion of shells screeching to and fro about the place. It was an ill-omened place, that dining-room, for all the windows on one side had been smashed, and in front of them a solid barricade of sandbags had been erected to diminish the effect of shells bursting on the gravel without. As we drank our tea placidly, half a dozen heavy shells went wailing over the house, and exploded noisily in the immediate vicinity.

There are châteaux, like the château of Hooge of which I spoke in a previous chapter, which have been totally destroyed by shell-fire. Yet you may find troops living in the grounds, in dug-outs furnished from the château, or sometimes even in a single room or cellar of the château which has escaped destruction. I have been to châteaux where almost every day shells plumped square into the crumbling brickwork, ploughing their way through ancient rafters and bursting with reverberating explosions amid Buhl tables and Empire chairs and Louis XIV. clocks and old French prints. I have seen gardens still blooming amid a horrid welter of destruction, with standard roses rearing their slender stems on high, and London pride and stocks and syringa straggling over little graves dotted here and there between gaping shell-holes, and tree-trunks blasted lying across shattered cucumber-frames.

I have been in a room, the last room habitable in a pretty little country-house where the flooring was of parquet, once highly polished, no doubt, but now stained with mud and scratched by hobnailed boots.

A splendid Empire clock ticked away on the white marble mantelpiece; the table, spread with tin plates and cups, some bully-beef in a saucer, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of whisky, was Buhl; the chairs were of mahogany in the Empire style. A common wash-hand-stand, retrieved, I should think, from the stables, stood in a corner; in another corner an Empire couch had been spread with a flea-bag and blankets, and served as a bed for the doctor, who had his quarters there. Two walls of the apartment were curtained off with sacking, for beyond was the open air—roofless rooms, piled-up with débris, and shattered walls.

But what of the proprietors of these châteaux in our lines ? you may ask. The British Army pays for everything it uses, pays rent for the châteaux it occupies, as for the horses or cattle it may (very rarely) requisition. The châtelains have very often gone away until the war is over; sometimes they have been called up to the French or Belgian armies, as the case may be. I have met with cases in which the châtelain has lived in his château during our occupation, and the officers quartered there have dined daily at his table.

The position is a little delicate. Our army is an army of gentlemen, and both officers and men have shown in this war that they know how to respect the feelings and property of the civilian population in our zone of operations, But, obviously, considerable tact is required to reconcile some elderly Countess, accustomed all her life to preside over a well-conducted, placid, and scrupulously clean household, with the irruption of a horde of healthy, active men,

shod with hobnails ("*Mon Dieu, le parquet!*"), very often muddy ("*O Ciel, mes tapis!*"), and inclined to smoke pipes all over the place.

In one case I heard of, a Headquarters Staff, on arriving at a château where they were to establish themselves, found that the owner and his wife, an elderly couple, had not been on the best of terms with their predecessors, a Headquarters Staff that had just moved on. A tactful Staff Captain went out to reconnoitre the ground. He found that their hosts had been a trifle *froissé* by a lack of understanding on the part of the other British officers who had been quartered there. He laid himself out to make friends with the old couple with some success.

One day they mentioned *en passant* that it was a pity there was only one swan on the lake, and that a female. The Staff Captain took counsel. Presently, with great secrecy, the youngest member of the Staff, who was thought to require a change of air, was despatched to Paris with strict orders only to return with a male swan. The British officer is a resourceful person, In three days the subaltern was back with a gentleman swan in a basket. This graceful present broke the ice between the British officers and their hosts, and when I visited that château, not only did the old couple preside daily at the officers' mess, but they had also given them the usage of certain rooms which they had resentfully closed to their predecessors.

Occasionally, on the other hand, the châtelain—in the case I have in mind it was a châtelaine—is irreconcilably disagreeable. The lady in this case was married, and her husband, having been mobilized,

was serving somewhere in the French firing-line. This circumstance had fired her indignation. With woman's sweet unreasonableness, she laid it down that soldiers who were not in the firing-line were a good-for-nothing pack of ne'er-do-wells, and if they expected to have a nice comfortable time in her château, she would show them that they were vastly mistaken. So this preposterous person would visit the house several times a day—she lived herself in another house close by—ferret about for any damage done, and generally make herself an unmitigated nuisance. The gardener actually had instructions, which he carefully observed, to lop off the heads of every flower in the grounds to prevent the British officers from plucking them for their rooms. The General quartered there might have had the woman promptly packed off about her business by saying a word to the French Military Mission at General Headquarters. He was, however, much too polite to do that, so the lady was suffered in silence, and only scolded behind her back.

This case, which I have only mentioned because it is amusing, and not because it is typical, is quite exceptional. In the main, the relations between our army and its French hosts have been admirable. There has been a maximum of consideration on the one hand, a maximum of grateful hospitality on the other. In years to come the memories that will linger about these old châteaux of those who gratefully accepted their hospitality will be of brave, unostentatious, clean-living gentlemen, like Bayard, premier knight of France, *sans peur et sans reproche*.

CHAPTER VII

G.H.Q.

In an army in which abbreviation by capital letter is carried to the pitch of mania, the hieroglyphics standing at the head of this chapter may be recognized, without undue difficulty, as signifying *General Headquarters*. This is a comparatively simple combination. It is not always thus. One requires a certain amount of practice to discern the different offices of the army in the field in a row of letters flashed out at one in conversation with soldier-men.

"Can you direct me to the D.A.D.O.S.?" a dusty motor-cyclist despatch-rider, one foot trailing on the ground beside his snorting machine, asks a quartermaster-sergeant in a village. "First on the right past the D.A.D.R.T.'s, the red house next to the A.P.M." Quite unperturbed by this fearsome array of letters, the youth whirrs cheerily off, and finds his destination without difficulty. Question and answer, as interpreted to the layman, signify: "Can you direct me to the Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services?" "First on the right past the Deputy Assistant Director of Railway Transport, the red house next to the Assistant Provost Marshal."

In all this maze of abbreviation, G.H.Q. is the combination most often heard at the front. For

G.H.Q. is the head of the army, the brain and nerve centre which directs and governs the whole vast organism of our fighting force, from the most advanced stretch of sandbags which marks the firing-line back to the enormous office of a thousand clerks, where the regimental records are kept in a snug French town far to the rear. To the men in the firing-line G.H.Q. is the home of the "brass-hats" (as Staff officers are popularly styled), a mysterious and remote place from which unexpected and inexplicable edicts are issued forth, mostly leading to unwelcome changes in comfortable billets or cosy trenches, a snug spot of soft jobs and easy living.

In reality G.H.Q. is nothing of the kind. I wish some of the imaginative writers who, in the course of one or other of the political controversies which this war has brought forth, have described G.H.Q. as a centre of fashion, swarming with idle A.D.C.'s buzzing about beautiful ladies, could spend a day or two in the place. Luxury follows fashion as surely as trade follows the flag. One glance at the bedroom which would be reserved for our friend, the imaginative writer, at the local hotel would speedily disillusionize him as to G.H.Q. being fashionable, luxurious, or even comfortable. —— (the etiquette of our army in the field forbids me even now to lift the transparent veil enveloping the identity of the French town where Sir John French has installed his General Headquarters) is not Brussels of 1815. Nor is it Capua. It is a small town with historic associations, particularly with England, the greater part of any architectural and antiquarian beauty it may have

possessed, however, swept away by the growth of industry.

G.H.Q. is a place of hard work and of simple living. The men in the trenches who "grouse," as all good soldiers "grouse," about the "soft" and "safe" jobs at G.H.Q. have no conception of the strenuous life of the men in the offices there. I am personally acquainted, not with one or two, but with scores of officers who are at their desk at eight o'clock, or earlier, each morning, Sundays included, and are kept hard at it, with not more than two hours' break in the day, until eleven o'clock at night. Rank makes no distinction. In fact, the heads of the different services set the example of "hustle" to their subordinates.

"Never in my life," said an officer with a distinguished record of service in the field in South Africa, "have I worked so hard as I have done at G.H.Q. I have not heard a shot fired in this war; I have never seen a shell burst; I have not set eyes upon a German, not even a German prisoner. I never get any time for exercise. Sometimes I long to be up in the trenches, getting hard and fit in the fresh air, and winning clasps for the war medal."

"It's very strange to be back at the old game," a General who had been moved from a high appointment at G.H.Q. to the command of a division in the field said to me one day. "Here I am following my natural vocation of commanding men in the field. I am getting sunburnt. I have an enormous appetite, and I sleep better than I ever did in my life. Of course, I miss my friends at G.H.Q., but this is a life of leisure compared to the grind there."

All the threads of the army run back to G.H.Q.—the threads controlling its strategy, its supplies of men, of material, of food, of equipment; its relations with our Allies, the French. To do proper justice to the work of G.H.Q. would require a volume; but, as I have set myself in this book to write an impression and not a technical review of the work of our army in the field, I will content myself with setting forth as briefly as I can the services centred at G.H.Q. as a preface to glancing at the conditions of life prevailing at the hub of the army.

General Headquarters, then, consists of the Command-in-Chief, the General Staff, the Adjutant-General's Staff, and the Quartermaster-General's Staff. Here we have assembled the principal services of the army, the supreme direction of all centred in the person of the Commander-in-Chief assisted by the General Staff, the Adjutant-General's Department responsible for *personnel*, and the Quartermaster-General's Department responsible for supplies. General Staff, A.G. and Q.M.G. Departments (you see how easy it is to fall into army abbreviations !), are represented by General Staff officers and an officer representing together A.G. and Q.M.G. Departments (he is called Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General) attached to each army, army corps, and division, thus insuring smooth departmentalization of the different branches right through the army. Each of the subdivisions of the three great services, General Staff, A.G., Q.M.G. Departments, also have their special representatives with armies, corps, and divisions in the field in the shape of Assistant and Deputy-

Assistant Directors of Medical Services, of Ordnance Services, and so on.

The General Staff is divided into two divisions—Operations, known as "*O*," and Intelligence ("*I*").

"*O*" occupies itself with strategy and tactics, the general brainwork of the army. It is also the centre to which all reports come.

"*I*" is the detective of the army. It is the business of this division to endeavour to discover by every possible means all about the enemy forces, their disposition and composition. One of the most important of the sections of "*I*" is the map department, where maps, not only of our own positions, but also, as far as possible, of the enemy, are prepared.

The A.G. Department likewise falls into two divisions—(*a*) Administration; (*b*) Military Law. The first attends to the all-important question of men, the wastage due to casualties and sickness, and the replenishment by fresh drafts out from home. At a stated hour every day telegrams begin pouring in from every part of the line with the day's casualties which are sent home, and immediate measures taken to refill the gaps thus caused by fresh drafts out from home.

The Medical Services, presided over by a Director-General of Medical Services, and their immense ramifications, from the regimental aid-post, installed in a house or barn right behind the firing-line, down to the hospitals established in palatial hotels at one or other of our army bases, come under this division of the A.G. Department.

The Military Law division deals with discipline, no

small matter in an army which has grown to the size of ours. Offences against military law, such as drunkenness, desertion, cowardice in face of the enemy, and so on, are matters with which this department deals. Trial is, of course, by court-martial, and the sentence is sent up to the Judge Advocate for confirmation by the Commander-in-Chief.

It was under the auspices of this division of the A.G. Department that the Suspension of Sentences Act, a measure which, though revolutionary in its bearing on military law, received next to no attention in England, was passed through Parliament. The effect of the Act is to empower the military authorities to suspend for the duration of the war the execution of a sentence passed on a British soldier on active service, and at the same time to offer him the opportunity to expunge the conviction by meritorious conduct in the field.

It is a sane, a merciful, but also a practical measure. Though it does not apply to death sentences in cases where the authorities are constrained to let justice take its course, in all ordinary circumstances a man need no longer feel that he has irretrievably ruined his career by a single unreflecting act. Absence from duty, for instance, is an offence that can find no condonement on active service. But a man with a clean record may shirk his duty under the influence of a fit of depression caused by passing indisposition or some other external circumstance. In these conditions a sentence of imprisonment may be passed, but its execution postponed until the end of the war. The man returns to his duty knowing that he can wipe

out the black mark against him by gallant behaviour in face of the foe. The Act has the practical advantage of frustrating the attempts of shirkers to evade their duty in the firing-line by committing offences which, under the old system, would have sent them down for a spell of penal duty at one of the bases.

The measure has been completely successful. It has undoubtedly prevented injustice being done in more than one case. I was told of a sergeant, for instance, who was sentenced to death by court-martial for cowardice in face of the enemy. It was an inexplicable case, for the man had an excellent record, but the facts were incontrovertible. The man's conduct had been disgraceful, and might have imperilled the position if his comrades had followed his example. According to custom, a report on the man was requested from his commanding officer. It was extremely favourable, and it stated, on the doctor's evidence, that on the occasion in question the sergeant was suffering from a liver attack.

While the case was being debated, the sergeant, who was carrying on with his duties, performed a deed which in other circumstances would certainly have won for him the Military Cross. It seemed an ideal opportunity for applying the Act, though, in point of fact, it had not then been passed by the House of Commons. The sergeant, who had been degraded, was restored to his rank, and the conviction wiped off his record.

Another case of an even more remarkable nature in which the Act was applied was that of a man who escaped from custody after sentence of death passed on

him for desertion had been confirmed by the Commander-in-Chief. By some means or other the man contrived to get wounded after his escape, and was in this way passed through the hospitals to England, where he spent a delightful week posing as a wounded "hero" back from the front. When he was discharged from hospital he calmly returned to his regimental depot, and was in due course sent back to France with a draft to his old battalion. The sergeant who received the draft promptly recognized the offender, and, speechless with stupefaction, marched him off under guard to the lock-up while the case was sent up to the A.G. Department for a decision.

The case was unique in the annals of the Department. Fortunately for the scapegrace, the authorities handling it were men of the world, and the decision they reached was both wise and merciful. It was argued that a man who would not let even a sentence of death deter him from returning to the front is the kind of man we want in the firing-line—what the army in the field would call "a stout feller." Accordingly the death sentence was commuted, and the scamp returned to the trenches with a long term of imprisonment suspended, like the sword of Damocles, over his head as an added inducement to valour.

The Provost Marshal, most feared of officers, with his acolytes, the Assistant Provost Marshals, commonly known as the A.P.M.'s, attached to the different armies and corps, is under this branch of the A.G. Department.

The A.P.M. is the instrument of military law. His mission is to look after discipline. Multifarious and

difficult are his duties. He must be drastic as Draco, tactful as Talleyrand, astute as Sherlock Holmes. He is the pass "wallah." He is the authority who at all times and places has the indisputable right to demand your papers and to inquire all about you. If a private or two get drunk in a village, it is the A.P.M. who must find out where and how they get their liquor despite the stringent army prohibition, and place the offending *estaminet* out of bounds. The A.P.M. must know the civilians who are respectable citizens in our zone of operations and those who are not.

Frequently his duties bring him into collision with the fair sex. Since immemorial times the courtesan has proved an invaluable instrument of espionage, and the advent of ladies of the roving eye in the towns of our zone is but one of the hundreds of topics which engage the attention of the A.P.M.

Pity the A.P.M.! He *must* be rather truculent in manner in order to assert his authority, for it is his duty to scent the spy in everyone whose business in the war zone is not instantly apparent. But hear him when papers and passes have been produced in impeccable order: "You know I have to do this. It's my job. You don't mind my troubling you—what?" The presence of civilians in the zone of our army is a valuable shelter to spies, and one must therefore be grateful to the unremitting labours of the A.P.M.'s, however inconvenient their activity may be at times.

"During the march of the Allies to the Meuse," writes Captain Maycock in his admirable treatise on

Marlborough's campaigns, "every possible provision had been made for the comfort of the men, while the discipline of the troops, and the fact that all supplies were scrupulously paid for, astonished the inhabitants of the countries through which they passed.

This high standard, established by Cadogan, Marlborough's famous Quartermaster-General, on the Danube and in Flanders, has been splendidly maintained—nay, surpassed—by his successors in this war. The supply services of the army have been above all praise. Whether the Q.M.G. was dealing with the four divisions of the original Expeditionary Force or with the great army into which that little body ultimately expanded, the supply service reached the same high level of efficiency. Whether in the summer heat of the retreat from Mons or in the icy chill of the winter in the trenches, the hardships of war have been consistently allayed for our troops by the abundance and regularity of their supplies.

The Quartermaster-General Department furnishes the army in the field with everything, including arms and ammunition, which are provided through the Ordnance Services, but are carried up to the front in the motor-lorries of the Mechanical Transport of the Army Service Corps, which is under the Q.M.G. Everything, from bully-beef and biscuits to fly-papers, from plum-and-apple jam to chloride of lime, is supplied by the Q.M.G.

The Q.M.G. works in close co-operation with the Inspector-General of Communications (I.G.C.), who controls the Lines of Communication—familiarly known as L. of C.—supervises the unloading of sup-

OUR TROOPS AND THEIR DAILY BREAD. A SCENE AT A BASE

"Daily Mail" phot.

plies at the base and their transfer to trains bound for the railheads at the front, "railhead" being the railway station or siding allotted to the division as its collecting-point on the line. At the railhead the Q.M.G. steps in again and sees to the collection of the supplies by the motor-lorries attached to each division, which take the supplies to the refilling-points, where the horse-carts of the different battalions are waiting to carry them right into the firing-line.

The Q.M.G. has to look after the motor and horse transport of the army. Through his Director of Transport he has to find the army in motor-cars and motor-lorries, with spare parts and petrol and tyres and enormous garages, where the havoc wrought by the rough Flanders roads can be repaired by expert mechanics; in motor-cycles for the despatch-riders of the Signalling Corps; in carts for the horse-transport. Through his Director of Remounts he has to provide the army with its horses and mules.

He is the army postman, controlling, through his Director of Postal Services, an admirable organization which keeps the men in the trenches in touch with home, even though their home be Alberta or Fiji, by means of postal deliveries as regular as those in England. He looks after requisitioning and billeting. In short, his activities are innumerable, and after months spent with the army in the field. I still come across traces of his usefulness in new directions. In an army which is always "grousing"—for grumbling has ever been the habit of the soldier—the comparative immunity from criticism of the Army Service Corps, chief handmaiden to the Q.M.G., is probably the

highest compliment that can be paid to the efficiency of that hard-worked department.

The organization of our army in the field is so admirable, its departmentalization so fascinating, so simple, that the temptation lies very near me to devote this chapter to a survey in detail of the diverse services whose direction is centred at G.H.Q. Efficient organization has a strange fascination for the lay mind, as witness the transformation which a few months of soldiering effects in your young civilian. He will bombard you with technical terms; he will pepper you with alphabetical abbreviations; he will, in short, so demolish you with his salvoes of "shop" that your mind in the process is reduced to the state of a trench after the "artillery preparation" is over, and the guns are "lifting" to make way for the infantry attack.

But I want to tell you of the life, of the soul of the army in the field. Your sons and husbands and brothers and cousins will fill in the details of the vast network of services which I have sketched above. While I have been talking (and boring you doubtless) of A.G.'s and A.P.M.'s and Q.M.G.'s, there are the sentries standing at the entrances to the nameless little French town, where G.H.Q. is established, waiting to inspect the impeccable credentials with which I can furnish you, and then to pass you on, with a brisk salute, into as strange a scene as you will see in the world to-day.

For this sleepy little French town, with its inevitable *Grand' Place*—a spacious cobbled square—its narrow streets mostly named after local politicians and other

notabilities, its neglected-looking cathedral and churches, its garish little shops, is a kind of museum of uniforms. Never was such a variety of military caps seen together before: many variations of the "brass-hat" of the Staff Officer, from a hideous kind of Sandford-and-Merton pattern with a swollen crown, which some of the arbiters of fashions have imported from Piccadilly, to the faded red and tarnished gold of the Brigade Major from the trenches; the forage-cap of the Royal Flying Corps, the Glengarry and Kilmarnock bonnet, the *képi* with its khaki cover—badge of the French interpreter—the slouch hat of the Gurkha, the puggaree of the Indian Cavalry, the common or garden service-cap of Mr. Thomas Atkins.

Then the boots and leggings! What a multiple variety! Immaculate field-boots of the A.D.C., boned and blocked and polished daily by enthusiastic "batmen" until you can see yourself in their resplendent surface; "pig-dealers," the grey, close-fitting, canvas leggings affected by the "horsy"; Stohwassers of every make and kind; puttees, brown, grey, and blue; ski boots; canvas field-boots; "ammunition boots," clean or mud-caked and sodden according as the wearer's duties take him near or away from the firing-line.

The *bureaux* of notaries, of insurance agents, of exporters and importers, have been turned into offices for the army services. Officers with such alphabetical titles as I have mentioned above stride with a preoccupied air in and out of old houses whose dilapidated fronts and faded rooms breathe an atmosphere

of fatigue that contrasts strangely with the bustle within.

Here in a room that might have come out of an illustration of Du Maurier in *Punch* of the seventies an officers' mess is installed. Tins of cigarettes and tobacco stand on the mantelpiece, the *Sketch* and the *Vie Parisienne* lie about the tables, maps hang on the walls, in the depressing atmosphere created by an abundance of rubbed and dusty plush, of cheap brass ornaments, of soul-searing chromo-lithographs, of dyed grasses crammed into vases as big as drain-pipes. Perhaps the word *mess* conjures up for you a picture of regimental plate, of shaded lights, of red-and-gold uniforms. Banish it from your mind! "Cut it out!"

Meals at G.H.Q. have only one excuse—viz., that man must eat. They are short and business-like, and the fare is plain. In this stern, hard-working North of France they have none of the amenities of French life. The wine is imported, and bad and dear at that; the cooking is atrocious; and as for cleanliness, I have dined in my time at many a humble eating-house in London where the food was served in a far more appetizing manner than I have seen it in the hotels in this part of France. Soup produced from soup squares, fish (on Wednesdays and Fridays, fish-market days) or macaroni, then roast beef or mutton (ration meat, and mostly very tough), followed by tinned fruit and coffee, is the average *menu* of the messes at G.H.Q. Immediately after dinner everybody bolts back to his work.

During the greater part of the day everything is in

movement at G.H.Q. Except for the orderlies waiting for messages outside the offices, and officers here or there talking in the street, everyone seems to be moving. Cars come chug-chugging up the narrow streets, waved in and out by military policemen posted at the dangerous corners, with little coloured flags affixed to the bonnet signifying the formation to which they are attached. There are French cars, adventurous-looking cars, some of them, heavily coated with the mud of Arras or the Argonne, or maybe even the Vosges, bearing mysterious numbers and letters on their wind-screens. They stand there in the sunshine while their drivers, begoggled and leather-coated, chat with a French interpreter or two, with a friendly town policeman, or a uniformed messenger from the Banque de France. In the group there will surely be a British A.S.C. driver or two surveying the Allied car with that silent mien of unspoken criticism which is the attitude of the chauffeur the world over towards a car other than his own.

Clean, well-set-up fellows are the sentries in the town furnished by the famous Territorial regiment incorporated in the G.H.Q. troops. The trim General with the blue arm-band you will often see walking about the town commands the G.H.Q. troops, and, as far as the British Army is concerned, represents law and order in the town. The Territorial regiment concerned has a drum-and-fife band that gives concerts twice daily on the *Grand' Place*, to the huge delight of the populace. It also organizes smoking-concerts of its own, at which a fine array of talent

is forthcoming. The pianist at entertainments of all sorts organized by our army in the field within a wide radius of G.H.Q. is a private of this battalion, a musician of no mean order.

If you want an idea of the medley of mankind that swarms at G.H.Q., come in here to the Fortnum and Mason's of the place. At all hours of the day the shop is full of officers and men, mess presidents and orderlies, ordering biscuits and liqueur and wine and tinned fruits and cake and macaroni and sardines and Heaven knows what. The trim young ladies who serve know us all by our units, if not by our names. You may hear them rating the patient and ox-like *garçon*, a stolid man of fifty or thereabouts. "*Eh bien! le whisky pour l'Intelligence? Où est-ce? Vous ne voyez pas que le Capitaine attend les conserves pour les Indiens? Voyons, dépêchez-vous!*"

One afternoon in the shop I met a Guardsman of my acquaintance, *liaison* officer with a French army. "The beggars won't let me pay my mess-bill," he protested, "so I am getting something in the way of a contribution to the mess. What do you think of asparagus?" And he went off presently to his car with a huge bundle of *asperges d'Argenteuil* under each arm.

There is no social life whatsoever at G.H.Q. For one thing, many of the leading inhabitants have left the war-zone, and gone to live in Paris or elsewhere; for another, the army in the field is far too busy for calling and dining. There are no amusements. There is a theatre, but it is empty. There is not even a cinematograph show. There are sing-songs arranged

by one or other of the different services from time to time, and one of the A.S.C. convoys has a " rag-time band," with mouth-organs and combs and tin cans by way of instruments, which is said to be very successful. But the fact is that no one has the time to organize amusements for the army. For G.H.Q. is the hub of the army, the power-house that supplies the driving-force to our army in the field.

Our army has established the most cordial relations with the French inhabitants of G.H.Q. The town must be truly thankful for the British occupation, for, on the testimony of the Mayor, the townspeople have made more money since the English arrived than they ever made in their lives. The English influence is very clearly seen in the shops. There are no less than three shops, for instance, doing a thriving trade in all the appurtenances of English games—badminton sets, tennis rackets and balls, cricket bats and balls and stumps, and so on. Bass's beer, Quaker Oats, all kinds of sauces and pickles, Perrier water, English cakes and biscuits, and, of course, English jam, are in the shop-windows, and are largely advertised through the town. Notices in English are displayed on all sides. " Watches Carefully Mended," " Top-Hole Coffee and Chocolat " (*sic*), " Manufacturer of Brushes and Brooms," " Washing Done for the Military," are some of the notices I have remarked. At dinner-time hordes of ragamuffins invade the one or two hotels and cafés with the English newspapers which have just come up, having arrived by the morning boat. In parenthesis I might remark that, in addition to the copies

of the London dailies given to the troops free as part of their rations, enterprising newsagents have established themselves in all the principal towns in the zone of our army, and send out newsboys with the papers as soon as they arrive to all the troops billeted in the neighbourhood. In this way I have seen the *Daily Mail* sold on a road less than five miles from the firing-line, with the guns rumbling noisily in the distance.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHIEF

" May the great God Whom I worship grant to my country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may no misconduct in any way tarnish it; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature of the British fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him Who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend.

" Amen, Amen, Amen."

(*Nelson's Prayer. A copy hangs in the workroom of the Commander-in-Chief at General Headquarters in France.*)

You might spend a couple of days in the little town where the headquarters of our army in the field is established without becoming aware of the presence of the Commander-in-Chief. The departmentalization of a modern army is so complete, the duties are so widely delegated, the responsibilities so extensively divided, that an officer, even of the higher grades, may serve for months with the army in the field and never come into personal contact with its supreme head.

This is a state of things which arises directly out of the conditions of modern war. The direct personal influence of military leaders on their troops is

no longer possible owing to the vast scale on which modern wars are conducted. In former times the General directed the battle from a hill-top which afforded him a commanding view of the operations as they unfolded themselves beneath his eyes. To-day, the General also looks down on the battle from a height, but only metaphorically speaking.

Field-Marshal Oyama playing croquet during the Battle of Mukden, the General in " Ole Luke Oie's " brilliant sketch who fought and worsted a trout in a pleasant garden whilst hundreds of men went to their death—these are but the symbols of a state of mental detachment which is essential in the modern General called upon to handle vast masses of troops operating on a gigantic scale. To keep his mind clear and unembarrassed by a host of details, to retain his mental freshness against the moment when a supreme decision, or maybe a series of supreme decisions, has to be taken, the modern Commander-in-Chief must delegate much more of his powers than formerly, must relinquish a great measure of his direct personal influence on his men.

The influence of the great modern General will always be indirect rather than direct. Comparatively few of the German troops fighting on the Western front had ever set eyes on Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, save in pictures, yet, when the rumour ran in the spring that he was coming to assume the supreme command in Flanders, the men in the trenches set up notices on the parapets announcing to the *Engländer* that Hindenburg was coming, and that the Germans would be in Calais in a week.

"Daily Mail" phot.

"THE CHIEF."

The influence of Sir John French on the British Army in France is as a strong leaven leavening the whole mass. The conditions of life of an army in the field, a great host of men working to the same end, the monotony of existence undisturbed by sex antagonism, united by the risk of death common to all, make men as sensitive to the transmission of influences as African tribes are to the transmission of news. In the field a strong character will make itself felt in a week. Imperceptibly, the men will begin to lean on qualities of determination, courage, intuition. All these are attributes of Sir John French, and they are, I believe, responsible, in quite an astonishing degree, for the splendid tenacity, the unshakable optimism, of the British Army in France.

Within his power, Sir John French has always sought to keep in personal contact with the men in the firing-line. More than once, on the retreat from Mons, the Commander-in-Chief might have been seen to leave his car and sit down beside the exhausted troops resting by the roadside, so tired that they did not care whether the whole German Army was in the next field. He would remain there on the dusty grass, and tell the men that it was only so many miles to the next halt for the night, and spur them on to fresh efforts by his generous praise of the splendid endurance they had shown up to then. In a little he would have them on their feet again, foot-sore and weary as they were, ready to face the world, if needs be, to win a pat on the shoulder, a word of appreciation, from "Sir John."

But the British Army in France has grown im-

measurably since those days when four divisions was England's entire contribution to the war on land. With the army of Mons, the Commander-in-Chief might yet hope to be the John French of South Africa, where the cavalry hailed the trim little man on the white horse as the harbinger of stern, swift blows against the Boer, as the incorporation of dash, decision, and resourcefulness. But with the great citizen army of to-day, in which he counts divisions where before he counted battalions, the British Generalissimo could not hope to keep in personal touch in the same degree as was possible with the cavalry in South Africa or with the little Expeditionary Force of August, 1914.

Nevertheless, Sir John French has never failed in this war to visit formations that have distinguished themselves, and to express to them personally his appreciation of their good work. I remember, after the second battle of Ypres, receiving word that the Commander-in-Chief would inspect some brigades of cavalry that had held our line round Ypres on May 13, when the Germans made their last and most violent attempt to burst through to the sea. It was a fine, warm morning in June, a regular Aldershot review day, though, Heaven knows! there was little enough of the red and gold of Cæsar's Camp or Laffan's Plain about the squadrons in their war-worn khaki drawn up in a square in a meadow by a country road. The Commander of the Cavalry Corps was there, and the Divisional General and the Brigadiers, and just in front, beside a fine, broad Union Jack fluttering from a flagstaff planted on a farm-cart, Sir John French,

exquisitely neat, as usual, in his trim khaki, with four rows of medal-ribbons, and immaculate brown field-boots, and a cane that he swung as he talked.

The men stood easy, Lifeguards and Hussars and Dragoons, dismounted as they had been at Ypres, their eyes on the soldierly figure before them, their thoughts, I wager, away among the poppies and the cornflowers of the salient where in their graves dead comrades smiled in their last sleep at the recollection of the good fight well fought. The Commander-in-Chief indulged in no rhetorics. He, like the plain man he is, likes plain speaking. So he stood up there against the farm-cart, and talked to the men in a clear, soldierly voice, and as he spoke, lo ! it was not the Commander-in-Chief addressing his troops, but just John French of the 19th talking to his cavalry, that cavalry he loved and made his life-work. There were no tears, no elegiacs, but heartening words of praise for good service stoutly rendered. There was, indeed, such perfect frankness in much of what the Field-Marshal said that I remember the blue pencil of the Censor cut furrows in the report of it I sent to my newspaper in London.

As soon as a new body of troops arrives in France, whether Territorials or Colonials or New Army, you may be sure that, before very long, the Rolls Royce, flying the Union Jack from the roof—the only car that may fly the old flag in France—will appear outside their billets, and the Commander-in-Chief will descend to see for himself what the new material is like. One has only to glance at his despatches to see that he never fails to pay a tribute to good qualities

in new troops out from home. Real soldier that he is, he always has a keen eye to the general appearance of the men, knowing that the best soldiers are the men who, even in the rigour of winter in the trenches, managed to preserve a cleanly appearance, and who, right up in the firing-line, are as punctilious about saluting as they would be in barracks at home. The Brigade of Guards, who always pride themselves upon their personal neatness, set a fine example to the army in this respect, and earned the approval of every good soldier.

Sir John French has had many residences since he came to France in August. Châteaux, farms, colleges, or other public buildings, and the villas or town-houses of such local notabilities as the Mayor, the lawyer, or the doctor, have afforded him hospitality from the battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat down to the stalemate of the war of positions which brought our General Headquarters to anchor for a spell. But no matter where the Commander-in-Chief has lived, though his house were French, its atmosphere has always been wholly and essentially English. Thus, at G.H.Q. in the little town of which I wrote in my last chapter, though the large and stately rooms and rather florid furniture, the pictures and statuary of the house in which he lives are *bourgeois* of the *bourgeois*, they are powerless to dissipate the pleasant family air of the place, the atmosphere of an English country seat in the shires.

It is a restful place. Though it shelters the brain of the army, there is no rush or flurry, even when heavy fighting is toward. Deep thinking and hard work are

going on day and night between the four walls of this plain, unpretentious house; but, save for the whirr of a telephone now and then, or the arrival of a Staff car or a cyclist, only the sentries at the gateway betoken the presence of the Commander-in-Chief.

You enter from the street under one of those arched entries, known as a *porte cochère*, found in all French towns. A small door, with panels of frosted glass on the left of the entrance, gives access to the hall, where the first thing to meet the eye is a pyramid of parcels, gifts from home for the Field-Marshal and his troops, mostly from unknown admirers. By every post these presents pour in, vivid testimony of the loving solicitude wherewith the folks at home hang on the life of the army in the field. Every imaginable kind of gift is there—Bibles, Books of Common Prayer, blessed medals and rosaries, charms of all sorts, "woollies" galore, socks and waistcoats and comforters and mitts.

One day even Russia sent her tribute of admiration in the shape of a little ikon of the far-famed Madonna of Kazan, before whose bejewelled image in the Kazan Cathedral at Petrograd thousands of suppliants kneel daily in silent prayer for the safe return of their loved ones from the war. Truly there is a great sameness about certain aspects of the war on both sides. I remember reading an amusing appeal by Field-Marshal von Hindenburg to the correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse*, my old friend, Dr. Paul Goldmann, begging him to tell people he did not want any more mitts or remedies against rheumatism and chilblains.

A small room to the right of the hall is the A.D.C.'s (Aide-de-Camp's) room, where one of the four A.D.C.'s

to the Commander-in-Chief is always present. He is known as the A.D.C. on duty. He remains in this room all day in attendance on the Commander-in-Chief, receiving and transmitting messages, answering the telephone on the desk at his elbow, dealing with applications for interviews with " The Chief," as he is called by his Staff, and receiving visitors. A huge map of the whole zone of the British Army in France hangs on the wall, and portraits of Sir John French and some of his Generals, cut from French and English illustrated papers, have been nailed up.

In the corner is a white door marked " PRIVATE." When a bell whirrs the A.D.C. disappears through this door. It leads to the workroom of the Commander-in-Chief.

A perfectly plain room, spacious and lofty, with large windows, from its white walls and massive marble mantelpiece and large mirror obviously the drawing-room of the house in other days, the big maps hung all round the walls and spread over the very large plain deal table, lend it an essentially business-like air. On the mantelpiece a handsome Empire clock and some candelabra are the sole ornaments in the room.

There is also a little illuminated card, headed " Nelson's Prayer," that finely inspired supplication for victory which they found in the great Admiral's cabin on board his famous flagship after he received his mortal wound. I have placed this beautiful prayer at the head of this chapter, because its plain, direct appeal, its confidence, and its dignity seem to me to be characteristic of the man on whom once

again the hopes of the whole British race are fixed. That little English prayer is the only visible link between Sir John French and home in his workroom in France.

The Commander-in-Chief spends the greater part of the day in this room. It is a place of hard work, of deep concentration, of lightning decisions on which hang the lives of thousands of men. You will find him there at all hours, dapper, fresh, as young as the youngest of his Staff, eternally giving the lie to his white hair and moustache. It is in this room that most of his despatches are written, those models of precise English that, without rhodomontade, false pathos, or exaggeration, set forth their plain tale of glory to make the Empire ring.

Sir John French always writes his own despatches. His warm words of praise, his frank words of criticism, are absolutely the expression of his own thoughts. When he has a despatch to write he will shut himself up in this reposeful room for hours at a time, neglecting his meals, working far into the night, until the last word is written and his name affixed:

"Your Lordship's most obedient servant,
"J. D. P. FRENCH,
"*Field Marshal, Commanding-in-Chief,*
"*British Army in the Field.*"

In an army of hard workers, in the centre of the hive of industry that is G.H.Q., no man works harder than "The Chief." Breakfast at the Commander-in-Chief's is from 7.45 to 8.30, but long before that time Sir John French is at his table studying the

reports which have arrived from the different armies during the night, and are awaiting his perusal when he comes down in the morning. Half-past eight finds Sir John at his place at the head of the breakfast-table, with a cheery greeting for everyone there.

At a fixed hour there takes place the daily conference between the Commander-in-Chief and the different heads of the services at G.H.Q. The Generals arrive singly or in pairs from their offices, a portfolio under their arm—the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of Intelligence. For an hour or more they are closeted singly or together with "The Chief." Operations past or future are discussed, the whole situation along our front reviewed, guns, men, supplies, the enemy's situation, and his probable plans.

The distribution of the rest of the day depends largely on the situation at the front. Once a movement has started and is progressing favourably, a Commander-in-Chief's work is done for the time. Broadly speaking, it is the Commander-in-Chief who conceives the strategy of an operation, it is the Chief of the General Staff who works it out, while its tactical execution lies in the hands of the General commanding the army to which the operation is confided. He in turn leaves the carrying out of more detailed operations to the Corps Commander, who delegates part of the yet more detailed execution to the Divisional General, and he in his turn relinquishes the details of the work of the battalions on the ground to the brigade and battalion commanders.

Visits to the different army commanders in the

field, the inspection of troops who have come out of action, of reinforcements, of new guns or appliances in the war of the trenches, interviews with visitors at G.H.Q., French Generals, British *liaison* officers with the French Army, or distinguished visitors from England, fill in the remainder of Sir John French's day. The arrival in the afternoon of the King's Messenger from London with despatches from the War Office and the morning newspapers absorbs the rest of the time until dinner, and often makes the Commander-in-Chief late for this meal, which, by his express orders, is never delayed for him.

Sir John French presides over his small household at G.H.Q. in a benevolent and paternal manner. All the members of his Personal Staff are old friends of his, and were with the Field-Marshal in South Africa. He calls them all by their Christian names, and each vies with the other in his devoted loyalty to "The Chief."

The genial, courtly presence of the man pervades his whole environment. Is the situation ever so desperate, the fighting never so severe, there is no fuss or flurry at the Commander-in-Chief's. Even during the retreat from Mons, when Headquarters was frequently moved, when for days at a time neither the Commander-in-Chief nor his Staff got even a few hours of unbroken rest, Sir John diffused about him the same calm atmosphere. He would not allow the overwhelming responsibility resting on his shoulders to overcloud the existence of the others. At meals he was cheery and debonair as usual, guiding the conversation into pleasant English channels, and illumi-

nating it with many anecdotes and witty sayings which his great and retentive memory has stored up from an exceptionally busy life and wide and varied reading.

More than once he astonished his Staff, at a critical moment, by announcing that he would go for a walk. Picking up his old riding-crop, he would stroll forth with one of the A.D.C.'s and walk for an hour through the country lanes, stopping to admire the view, or to criticize a horse, or to look at the crops. But on his return he would go straight to his maps again, and then like a flash he would announce his decision. "I will do this and that!" And they would realize that whilst he had strolled and chatted his mind had been wrestling with the military problem that had obsessed them all.

Dinner is a pleasant meal at the Commander-in-Chief's. Often there is a distinguished visitor from London present, a member of the Cabinet who has come out to get a glimpse for himself of conditions at the front, a leading scientific authority despatched on some mission or other, distinguished ecclesiastics like the Bishop of London or the Archbishop of Westminster. For many months the Prince of Wales, as A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief, dined nightly at Sir John's table, a very charming, extremely natural young officer, who was simply addressed as "Prince," and who was best pleased when no notice whatsoever was taken of his exalted rank. There is never any formality about precedence at the Commander-in-Chief's, save that the guest of the evening sits on the right of the Field-Marshal.

Under the eye of "The Chief." Troops marching past Sir John French at the Front.

Sir John French presides at his dinner-table with delightful urbanity. Books and battlefields have been the study of his life. He has, I believe, read all the histories of the campaigns of the world's great Generals, from Julius Cæsar's *Commentaries* down to Ropes's *History of the American Civil War*, and the text-books on the Franco-Prussian War, especially the German. But he does not believe in reading alone. He is fond of quoting a saying of Lord Wolseley's: "A soldier ought to read little and think much." In accordance with this maxim, Sir John French has not only read but assimilated, and he has done a great deal of both.

But the military authors have not alone engaged his attention. He is a profound admirer of Dickens, and he can find suitable quotations and similes from Dickens for the most varied situations of life. He is not a great talker. He only speaks when he has something to say. But that is always to the point, and often refreshingly original.

The Commander-in-Chief is a profound student of humanity. That is why he admires Dickens. That is why he loves the British soldier, with his whimsicalities and his contradictory ways. He knows the British soldier as well as Lord Roberts knew him, and that is saying a great deal. He understands the British soldier's pride in his work, and therefore he always gives credit where credit is due. When the Suffolks under his command in South Africa walked into a hornets' nest at Grassy Hill, Sir John French took the first opportunity that presented itself—it was not until several months later that he met them

again—to tell them they were not to blame for what happened.

" It has come to my knowledge," he said to them, " that there has been spread about an idea that that event cast discredit of some sort upon this gallant regiment. I want you to banish any such thoughts from your mind as utterly untrue. . . . You must remember that, if we always waited for an opportunity of certain success, we should do nothing at all, and in war, fighting a brave enemy, it is absolutely impossible to be sure of success. All we can do is to try our very best to secure success—and that you did on the occasion I am speaking of." When the 2nd Worcesters saved the day at the first battle of Ypres by recapturing Gheluvelt at the bayonet-point, the Commander-in-Chief made every possible inquiry to find out the name of the officer who had ordered the charge. The name of the officer remained for a long time a regimental secret, but Sir John French gave the gallant Worcesters a very fine " mention " all to themselves in his despatch on the Ypres fighting. It was not until months later that it was definitely established that the author of the celebrated order was that most gallant soldier the late Brigadier-General C. Fitzclarence, V.C., who was afterwards killed in action.

Thus, though Sir John French must fain deprive himself of the privilege he would be the first to want to enjoy, of seeing his troops actually at grips with the Germans, he is not simply a distant name, a figure on an Olympic height, to the men in the trenches. He is a pillar of strength, a man that soldiers trust, who

voices to the great public beyond this little zone of war the deeds that have won a soldier's approbation, or who gives vent in carefully chosen words to the soldier's execration of the cynical treachery of the enemy. The bond uniting the Commander-in-Chief with the men in the field is not to be analyzed, for it is intangible. But it is nevertheless a very real tie of mutual esteem, trust, and affection.

Yet the army which in the fulness of time Sir John French has been called upon to command is no longer the army of South Africa, a small, highly trained band of professional soldiers whom the Germans, on first meeting with them at Mons, dubbed in despair "an army of non-commissioned officers." Since the days of the Civil War it is the first national army that England has ever had, and the England that has put it in the field is the greater England of the twentieth century, the British Empire, whose pioneers sprang from that selfsame doughty stock that did not fear to lay hands on the Lord's Anointed if thereby liberty might live.

The army has flung wide its portals to the civilian. All barriers of caste or wealth are broken down. The officer is no longer a member of a small military oligarchy, nor the soldier the tough old professional fighter of whom Kipling delighted to write. Mulvaney, Learoyd, and Ortheris have not vanished from the army. But they have vanished as average types. If they had escaped the destiny of so many of the magnificent fighters of our original Expeditionary Force, which was the quintessence of our standing army—six feet of earth in Flanders or a long visit to

Germany—the three friends of Kipling's tales would have passed out of their former sphere of action. The incorrigible Mulvaney, maybe, might yet be a sergeant, the backbone of his platoon, putting the new-comers, officers and men alike, up to all the dodges of the trenches. But the other two would surely be officers, with suspiciously new Sam Browne belts, a little uncertain of their social position, but treated with all the more deference for that by their fellow-officers.

Socially it is a topsy-turvy army. Learoyd is brigade machine-gun officer with the Military Cross, and has already learned the proper degree of nonchalance in returning the salutes of men who, in civilian life, maybe, themselves were wont to command, who perhaps even shared in that incomprehensible English prejudice against the military which refused the red-coat a seat in the stalls of a London theatre or a drink in the saloon bar of a public-house. "When I went to see the old people in Yorkshire in my uniform for the first time," a fine old soldier of my acquaintance, a sergeant of the Coldstreams with twenty-two years' service, told me once, "my father said: 'I never thought boy of mine would disgrace the family by going for a soldier. Get out of here, and never darken my doors again until you have taken that red coat off!'"

Nous avons changé tout ça! The last shall be first and the first last in this citizen army of ours. I know of a peer of the realm, an Earl who is the head of one of the oldest families in the British Isles, who is serving as orderly in a clearing hospital at the front. When last seen he was whitewashing and whistling a little

tune as he worked, the bearer of one of our greatest names at the beck and call of the humblest medical student with a commission in the R.A.M.C., but, like the latter, filling his niche in the service of the State.

Could one imagine a more difficult task, amongst all the manifold problems which have confronted us in this war, than the expansion of the framework of our little Expeditionary Force to embrace these hundreds of thousands of men, from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, from India and Canada, from South Africa and Australia, from Fiji and the West Indies, with their varying ideas of personal liberty and discipline ? That this task has been successfully accomplished is due, for one thing, to the fact that every man in our army is an apostle, bearing within him a message of liberty to the world, ready to subordinate every personal feeling to the end of victory; for another, to the astonishing adaptability of our race, which has enabled Lord Kitchener to stamp an army from the earth, and Sir John French and his Generals to breathe into it the spirit of our great military past.

If you took a small haberdasher in a London suburb and suddenly increased his modest establishment until it reached the dimensions of William Whiteley's or of Harrod's, would you blame the man if, even with unlimited resources, he showed himself incapable of achieving the same relative measure of success as he had attained with his little shop ? You know that you would not. You would rather blame the lack of organization that had suddenly thrust enormously increased responsibilities on a man who, had the process been gradual, might have adapted himself to

the growing dimensions of his business. Yet this is what the country has thrust upon Sir John French. He, a General, like all save the Balkan and Turkish Generals, without any experience of modern European war, has been called upon to meet in unequal combat the finest military brains that the application of forty years can produce, with a sword that has constantly changed its weight and balance and length and sharpness.

He has sustained the ordeal. His adaptability of temperament and breadth of outlook, for which all Britons may thank God, has enabled him to cope with an army ten times the size of the little force which he originally led out to France, and to surround himself with Generals who have shown themselves able to handle divisions where before they were dealing with battalions. Not only have the numbers of our army increased; the quality of our men has changed. The sturdy fighters of Mons and the Marne have been reinforced by Territorials who are, generally speaking, of a higher stamp of intelligence, and accordingly endowed with the good and bad fighting qualities which the more trained intellect bestows, and the men of the New Army, in which all types and classes of Briton are found side by side in the ranks. Not only has the question of the right leading of these new formations proved all-important, the problem of their assimilation into the existing organization was one requiring tact and a fine appreciation of the *Imponderabilia* of the situation. That it has been successfully solved History, when it comes to review the world-shaking events of our days, beside which man

seems but the puniest of pygmies, cannot fail to count to the merit of Sir John French.

To our citizen army, then, Sir John French is more than a Commander-in-Chief. He is a national leader, the man to whom it is given to direct that fount of ardent patriotism which has inspired Britons, wherever the Union Jack flies, to lay down their work and follow the drum. No man is more conscious of the responsibility resting on his shoulders than Sir John French. No man is more profoundly convinced of the justice of our cause. No man could appreciate more gratefully the immense confidence which the nation has reposed in him by entrusting to his care the greatest army that the British Empire has ever put in the field.

CHAPTER IX

INTO THE FIRING-LINE

I NEVER come upon the firing-line without a sense of surprise. Upon eye and imagination alike it breaks with a sudden shock. You emerge from a long communication trench, driven right through all obstacles, now across a deserted highway with a vista of grass-grown cobbles stretching away on either hand; now straight through the vitals of a stricken farm, where the head is on a level with a floor littered with rubbish, discarded equipment, rags, or empty ration-tins; through the silent *basse cour* with its empty chicken-run, its deserted pigeon-coop, its barns gaunt and blasted, its forlorn carts and rusting machinery; through cornfields waist-high in a self-sown crop gay with poppies and cornflowers.

Up these trenches, you may reflect as you trudge along with what one might call a rabbit's-eye view on either side, reliefs and rations go up at dark, long files of silent men plodding through the summer night with the frogs croaking in the marshes and the night-jars creaking in the trees. Down these trenches come the men who have done their spell of duty in the firing-line, muddy and unshaven and laden with all kinds of personal belongings from a month-old copy of the *Sketch* to a German cooking-pot, silently

delighted at the prospect of a few days' respite from trench mortars and "whizz-bangs" and bullets and vermin. Here, when fighting is toward, there is a crush in the Strand on a Saturday night. In one direction go the men bearing boxes of bombs and ammunition swiftly forward to the firing-line, squeezing themselves back against the muddy walls on the cry of "Gangway there!" to let orderlies with messages past; in the other direction the wounded, roughly bandaged, make their painful way back to the regimental aid-post or field ambulance. The shells come crashing over in and around the trench, and the bullets from the front line snap and whinny and whistle in the air as though to proclaim to all men still alive that their mission is not yet accomplished. But a little rain, and these trenches become first quagmires of mud, the sticky whitish clay of Flanders, of which our men speak with horror, or the browner soil of France, then stagnant ponds, knee or even waist deep, in which men, walking alone and struck down by shell or bullet, have been known to drown before help could reach them.

But sombre thoughts have no place in the communication trenches. The men you meet, passing up and down, are smiling. The Adjutant, descending with mud-covered boots and puttees, his stout broomstick in his hand, from his morning walk round his battalion's section of the line, gives you a cheery "Good-day!" after the etiquette of officers when they meet out here. A working party, laden with spades and saws and beams, who are marching in Indian file ahead of you, are joking as they plod.

One of them has a mouth-organ, and is softly playing a little music-hall jingle as he walks:

> " I'd like to be, I'd like to be,
> I'd like to be right home in Dixie. . . ."

As, with a whistling " whoosh," a shell comes over from the deep blue sky ahead, the music stops, the party stops, and the men, turning with a common movement, crane their heads out of the trench to see where the shell has fallen. Boom! . . . the report comes back, and a cloud of dense black smoke eddies out above a clump of trees. " My word! " says the sergeant, " the brigade's catching it to-day and no mistake!" Then the party trudges on again down the trench, while the crickets chirp noisily in the corn, and the musician resumes his little tune:

> " I'd like to be, I'd like to be,
> I'd like to be right home in Dixie. . . ."

Cheery and confident like all our men, they heed neither the menace of death which those whistling shells convey nor the grim signs that meet them on their way of the harvest the Reaper has gathered in those peaceful cornfields. Here the trench passes a little burial-ground in an orchard, lying between an old farm-house and its deep broad moat, the branches of the apple and pear trees leaning down until they seem to caress with their gnarled fingers the little white crosses of the graves. Now the trench stops by a sunken ditch, where a faint and horrible odour speaks of fallen Germans buried in the slime. The men cross the ditch by its little bridge with exagger-

ated sounds expressive of disgust, with a joke, in which horror has no place. "*Heute Dir, morgen mir*" is the philosophy of the trenches, and a laughing philosophy it is.

Some day a poet shall sing the song of the communication trench, when peace has come back to the land and the long grasses, springing up, have smothered the narrow way that once upon a time led up to the fiery ordeal of battle. He shall tell of the men who dug the trench by night, toiling in the silver radiance of the moon among the eerie shadows flitting in and out of ruined hamlets and deserted farms. He shall conjure up the hard, black silhouette of the group, standing out against the light of the German star-shells soaring skyward with a hissing screech, making the countryside as bright as day.

His verse shall carry in its swing the dull thud of pick and shovel on the soft ground blending with the hurried gasping of the machine-guns and the crack of the rifles in the firing-line. He shall sing of the men who have trodden the marshy bottom of the trench going gladly forth into battle—of those who went up and came down, of those who went up and were presently laid to rest in that earth to which, by the Heavenly Will, all men must return. And for the brave smiles and calm resolution those narrow ditches have seen, my poet shall sing of them, not as a place of horror, not as the ante-chamber of death, but as the strait path that leads to glory.

Imperceptibly the winding course of the communication trench brings you nearer to noises of which you are aware without seeking to fathom their

meaning. There are sounds like those produced by running a stick along an iron railing, there are individual, crisp noises like the smack of a mass of butter on a marble slab, vague echoes in the air like the rustling of gigantic wings, and here and there explosions, now loud and insistent and close and terrifying, now distant and muffled like the bark of an old dog. Then, as you realize with a flash that these are the sounds of war, and begin to distinguish between the rap-rap of the machine-gun, the hard crepitation of the rifle-bullet, and the dull boom of a shell, you find you are in the firing-line.

What the eye focusses is merely a scene of some disorder, where the communication trench debouches into the open and fades away opposite a line of sandbags. Here is all the bustle of the bivouac, soldiers grouped about fires on which pots are simmering, others polishing accoutrements, " cleaning up," writing letters. But the eye does not take in this picture. It is looking farther afield to where, on a low platform behind a neat row of sandbags, the sentries are standing immobile beside their rifles. Their bandoliers are strapped across them, their bayonets are fixed. Their backs are turned to you. They look forward with an air of strained attention. They are the look-out men in the fire-trench.

Piles of sandbags and a great deal of timberwork, timber flooring, and timber supports, as neat and prosaic as a street excavation in London, is what the eye sees. But my first view of that line of men standing on guard at the parapet stimulated my imagination more than any other picture I have seen

in this war; for I realized that these quiet figures behind their stout rampart are the bulwark of our civilization, an infinitesimal fraction of the line which the Allies have flung from the Channel to the Alps.

> "Our world has passed away,
> In wantonness o'erthrown.
> There is nothing left to-day
> But steel and fire and stone."

Here, in the firing-line, one stands on the ruins of that world of ours, in Kipling's fine symbolism, that passed away at the menace of the Hun. The little strip of parapet before us, like all the rest of the line winding its way from the sands of Nieuport to the frontier of Switzerland, is the boundary-line between civilization and barbarism, the bourne which marks the frontier between idealism and materialism.

Beyond the parapet is broken ground, utterly uninteresting, utterly prosaic, for all that it is the realm of death. Immediately in front of the trench is barbed wire, new and taut and cleanly grey, fastened in a perplexing criss-cross work to lines of stout wooden posts driven deep in the ground; beyond that a stretch of flat field, of corn or grass or stubble, with a ditch here and a tree there, and maybe a pile of blackened bricks that once was a farm. Between corn and grass and stubble the earth has been turned up in places—you may see it brown or white beneath its cloak of scarlet poppies or azure cornflowers. An irregular cluster of posts from which hang jagged fragments of barbed wire, a whitish line in the ground marking an old trench, something like an old grey

coat lying humped up on the grass or a pair of boots thrust out from a hole in the ground, which, if you have seen a battlefield before, you know to be unburied corpses—all these are relics of former fighting.

This sordid patch of ravaged fields is the theatre of war. These crumbling ditches and broken posts, these obliterated farmsteads, these lamentable dead, and, always opposite, the long, low line of sandbags marking the German trenches, make up the setting of so many great dramas in our history of to-day. On this scene our young men gaze as they take a final look about them before plunging forward to the assault that is to lead them to their death. In these surroundings are performed those great deeds of gallantry which stir our race to the core. Whether you are in Flanders or the Argonne, in flat or undulating country, the space between the lines is always the same. It is as dead as the castle of *la Belle au Bois dormant*, the only truly neutral ground in Europe to-day.

An extraordinarily untidy-looking jumble of multicoloured sandbags, white and blue and green and stripey (like the ticking of a mattress), marks the German line.

You will be disposed to think that the German trenches must be ill-constructed until you have seen our line from the outside. Then you will understand that, under the weight of the parapet and the influence of the wet, sandbags get squeezed out of their regular line, many besides being constantly ripped open by the bullets plunging through their canvas into the mud within with a sharp smack.

The German trench-line looks old and untidy and weather-beaten. The only neat thing about it are the dark grey steel plates let in at intervals all along the line. These are the plates with a loophole that may be opened or shut for firing purposes.

The trench-line is finite. Here England, the Empire, ends. Up to the line, by grace of the A.S.C., you may live your life as an Englishman, eat your bully beef and drink your dixie of tea, receive your two posts a day and your newspaper, and enjoy the safety of the strong iron ring which the Grand Fleet has thrown about our vast possessions. Beyond the line the *Polizei-Staat* very soon begins. Behind the parapet across the intervening space framed in the little loophole of our firing-plate everything is *feldgrau*. As regular and universal as the drab grey uniform of the German hordes is the mentality of that people moving like one man to the wires pulled in Berlin—wires that stretch from the ugly yellow building of the *Grosser General Stab*, by the Koenigsplatz, to this narrow ditch in Flanders.

It is overwhelming, this first glance into the enemy's country. Spires and towers, mine-shafts and chimney-stacks, are as fingers beckoning to the Allies, pointing to them the path of duty and honour. A forest of tall factory chimneys, seen cold and smokeless in the blue of the horizon, mark where Lille waits feverishly the hour of her deliverance. From all parts of our line I have gazed long into the zone of the German Army, from the banks of the Yser Canal in the north, down to the heart of the Artois country in the south, and woven for myself mental pictures of the

life of the Germans in the field, with only a hundred yards or so separating them from our lines, nearer than most of them have ever been to England or, please God, ever will be. Did ever, in the whole course of history, a hundred yards bridge a gulf so vast as that existing here—between individual liberty and chivalry and mutual forbearance, on the one hand, and, on the other, a police-controlled mentality, a blind adoration of brute force, and a cynical disregard of the teachings of Christ ?

With the combatants on both sides securely hidden from view deep in the ground, there is little opportunity in this siege warfare of seeing the daily life of the German at the front. A French General who had been in the field since last October jubilantly informed a friend of mine one day this summer that he had that morning seen a German for the first time. I may therefore, I presume, esteem myself fortunate to have seen quite a number of Germans in their lines in the course of my journeyings up and down the front.

I shall never forget the first German I saw. It is true that he was not in the German lines, but in the British military hospital installed in the Trianon Palace Hotel at Versailles. It was in September, and the army was on the Aisne. This German was lying in a tent in the beautiful garden of the hotel abutting on the park of Versailles. He was dying of gangrene, and his condition made it impossible to keep him indoors in a ward with the other wounded. His bed had therefore been moved into this tent—a large, airy place. With him there was another gangrene victim, a British soldier.

It was a grim and poignant meeting. A civilian doctor, who was with me, whispered, directly he saw the man and breathed the air of that tent, that the case was hopeless. The German was a thick-set, bearded Landsturm man, nearing the fifties. His face was very bronzed, and looked almost black beside the whiteness of his pillow. He was fiercely and bitterly hostile, and his eyes, already dulling with the shadow of approaching death, blazed for a moment with unconcealed enmity as he looked at the Englishman by his bedside.

I spoke to him in German. He never took his eyes off my face as he heard again the familiar sounds of his mother-tongue. I asked him his name. He told me. I have forgotten it, but I remember he said he was a farmer from near Hanover. His voice was very, very weak, and the intonation was indescribably sad. I asked him how he felt. "*Es geht mit mir zu Ende!*" (I am all but finished), he replied slowly.

I asked him if he was in need of anything. He shook his big brown head, and answered: "*Man ist sehr gut zu mir*" (They are very good to me).

Had he relatives? I asked. Could I write to anybody for him? "*Ich habe niemand,*" came the reply in his sad voice.

A widower, all his children dead, this old German had left his farm on being mobilized, and had gone all through Belgium with the German Army until they had abandoned him, wounded, on the retreat from the Marne. When I left him, with a phrase about keeping a good heart, for he would soon be

well (how senseless it must have sounded to that man who for days had seen the Black Angel hovering at his bedside !), he shook his head, and said: "*Ich glaub' es nicht !*" I never saw him again or learnt his fate, for I left Paris that same afternoon. But I have often thought since then of the peaceful life of that humble Hanoverian farmer sacrificed to the insensate arrogance of the neurasthenic who wears the purple of the Hohenzollerns.

Apart from prisoners, the first German I encountered at the front in this war was in the space between the lines. His work for "*Kaiser und Reich*" was done. With hundreds of his fellows he lay stiff and stark in the moonlight before our trenches at Neuve Chapelle. He looked like a waxen image as he lay on his back in the grass, in his grey uniform all splashed with mud, his helmet, clotted with blood (I have it as a memento of that night), still on his head, his rifle with its rusting bayonet grasped in one hand flung wide. All around him lay his comrades as the machine-guns of the Indians had mowed them down. By the light of the flares I could see the grass dotted with these sprawling figures, so inert and limp that one would have said it was a group in a wax-work show rather than an actual picture of war.

I have looked down on the villages of Messines and Wytschaete, built upon the slope of the ridge that bears their names, where the Germans dwell in desolate cities and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. I have seen the smoke of their *Mittagessen* rising into the air from the cellars and dug-outs in which they live by day,

and once I caught a glimpse of a figure, grey against a red wall, slipping in and out of the ruins.

Looking out over the German lines with a telescope one day, my Ross focussed suddenly and surprisingly a portly German, a little forage cap on his head, absorbed in the preparation of something in a little pot. Presently he dipped down and disappeared, but almost the next moment two other grey figures came bobbing along down the trench. They were out of range of our rifles, and, with ammunition a luxury, not worth wasting a shell on.

More than once I have watched Germans at work behind their lines. One summer afternoon, in particular, I had a regular surfeit of Germans. First a cart appeared, slowly descending a field. As I followed it with my glass until it stopped, my eye caught two diminutive figures digging. In another part of my field of vision I saw two German officers out riding, the one on a bay, the other on a white horse. They galloped across a field, then walked their horses, to cool them, alongside the fringe of a belt of black forest. They were engaged in animated conversation, and as I watched I wondered what their feelings would have been had they known that two artillery officers at my side were discussing whether it was worth while putting a shell over at them. The verdict was against a shot, so the two officers continued their ride undisturbed.

There is nothing more thrilling than to watch the discovery and shelling of a working party by our guns. I was present one day when a detachment of Germans were made out digging on a road behind a

screen of trees. I saw four of them myself quite distinctly, working busily in their white shirts, their tunics discarded. A few brief directions about angle and direction and shell went over the telephone to the battery behind us. Then I glued my eye to the glass and waited.

The four men worked on. I could see the flash of their shirt-sleeves behind the trees. One man had a loose sleeve which kept coming unrolled, and which he kept rolling up again. A loud explosion . . . a rushing noise . . . the telephone orderly's voice, "First gun fired, sir!" . . . three more explosions, and three more shells cleaving the air, and, almost simultaneously, as it seemed, a pear-shaped ball of white smoke, then another and another and another . . . four detonations—boom! bum-bum-bum! Between the appearance of the first white pear-drop and the second there was a flash of white cloth between the trees . . . then all was quiet. And presently I heard the telephone orderly slowly dictating a report to the Brigade . . . "dispersed a German working-party on the —— road."

The men love to get these glimpses of the Germans. When the line is quiet, and the messages, "Nothing to report," accumulate in piles on the table in the Operations Section of the General Staff, sniping is a welcome break in the monotony of trench life. I was in the trenches of the Leinster Regiment one day and presently found myself in an outpost established in the ruins of a farm which was only some 15 yards from the enemy. As it was not desired that the Germans should know the farm was occupied, the

men in the outpost had strict injunctions that they were not to fire except in case of an attack. The men squatting in a narrow trench—to have raised oneself to one's full height would have meant instant death—showed me the German trench a stone's-throw away in a periscope. " 'Tis a pity we mayn't shoot now," they whispered to me. " D'ye see that bit of tree beyond there ? Sure, the Allemans is always potterin' about there. There's a fine big fellow with great whiskers on him comes out of that sometimes. Faith ! you couldn't miss him !" They spoke with such regret that I almost laughed.

The Leinsters had given all the German snipers names. One, believed to be established in a tree, was known as Peter Weber, another was Hans, another Fritz. One of the Leinsters, an excellent marksman, spent the whole of his spare time sniping. He had his little corner, and when he came back he used to regale his friends with fabulous stories of old Germans with long white beards that he had seen. He had " got " an officer the morning of the day I was in those trenches, and the " frightfulness," which always follows after a sniper's bullet has found its billet, went on with great regularity all through the afternoon in the shape of half-hourly salvoes of whizz-bangs.

The sniper's job is no sinecure. Both sides are always engaged in trying to locate snipers, and once a sniper's nest is discovered, a few rounds with a machine-gun will generally bring him down, however well concealed he may be. A sniper never knows but that an enemy marksman has found him out, and is

waiting, finger on trigger, for the slightest movement on his quarry's part to pick him off.

Sniping is an integral part of trench warfare. The Germans attach so much importance to it that they have not hesitated to issue expensive telescopic-sight rifles to their picked marksmen. They keep machine-guns and clamped rifles trained on certain spots, and a man always ready to open fire immediately a movement becomes visible over a certain measured space with a good background. A certain amount of wastage from sniping is inevitable. The trench lines wind so much that it is not always possible to make trenches secure from every angle of fire. We have to buy our experience, and I have passed in our trenches many a newly heightened parapet or freshly constructed traverse, the price of which was a man's life.

As far as sniping is concerned, I believe that the British soldier holds the mastery. In our Regular army, the private cannot reach the maximum of pay until he has passed as a first-class shot, with the result that almost all our Regulars are fair marksmen, and some are very fine shots indeed. Of the Territorials, probably the London battalions contain the best riflemen. There are some very good snipers among the Indians and also the Canadians, as both possess in their ranks a good percentage of hunters.

I have been in several German trenches, and they were all well constructed. The Germans are the beavers of trench warfare. They were quick to recognize the rôle that heavy artillery was destined to play in deciding the fortunes of the war of positions. Their aim has therefore been to construct dug-outs, proof,

IN A GERMAN TRENCH.

One soldier watches the periscope and the other attends to the telephone.

if possible, even against hits with high-explosive shells, in which their men can take shelter during an artillery bombardment, and emerge, when the guns lift and the infantry assault, to defend the trench with machine-guns, many of which are made to sink at will into specially constructed cement shelters.

The Germans work with antlike industry. Thus, in the eight days that elapsed between the loss of the trenches round and about the château of Hooge, on the Ypres-Menin road, on July 30, and their recapture by our infantry on August 9, they constructed an amazing network of trenches and dug-outs. The vast mine-crater (caused by the mine we exploded here on July 19 when we reoccupied it) resembled an amphitheatre with its tiers of bomb proof shelters scooped out of the crumbling sides of the chasm, and shored up with tree-trunks. The dug-outs in the trenches took a diagonal plunge downwards, were most solidly constructed, and afforded accommodation for four or five men at a time. They were, like all German dug-outs, quite comfortably furnished with beds and furniture from the abandoned cottages in the vicinity.

There are known to be trenches in the German lines which are lit by electric light from Lille, but I have not seen any of these. Apropos of the Lille electric-light supply, it is a fact that for many weeks after the Germans had occupied Lille, Armentières, the important industrial centre which is in our lines and which received its electric current from Lille, only five miles or so away, continued to draw its electric power as before. The joke

was too good to last, and one day without warning the current was cut off. It is believed that a spy revealed to the Germans the fact that they were lighting the operations of the Allies.

What has struck me particularly about the German trenches I have been in is the extraordinary collection of objects of all kinds that the men have accumulated there. The German soldier resembles the magpie in his pilfering and hoarding habits. Psychologists must explain the mental state of a man who will go into action with articles of ladies' underwear in his haversack, or who will take ladies' boots, a feather boa, or a plush-covered photograph-album with him into the trenches. Their predilection for looting ladies' *lingerie* gave rise to a legend which in its numerous versions resembles the story of the Russians or the Bowmen of Mons. This story, which was generally current after Neuve Chapelle, was to the effect that the infantry on entering the village had found some girls, half demented with fright, hiding in a cellar. The theory was that they had been carried off by the German troops for their own base uses.

When going round the battalions collecting material for the story of Neuve Chapelle which I was writing—it was the first newspaper message of the kind to be written from the British front in France in this war—I came upon this tale of the women of Neuve Chapelle in every imaginable form. Now the victims were peasant women, now they were beautifully dressed *demimondaines* from Lille, or, again, they were little more than children. Finally I reached the Rifle Brigade, the regiment that was first to enter the

village, and heard the truth. In one of the cellars in which some German officers had been living a quantity of ladies' undergarments were found. The sight of these lying on the ground outside the cellar apparently gave rise to a story that was firmly believed at the time right through the army.

I saw these German trenches at Neuve Chapelle within ten days of the battle. They showed many grim traces of the fighting in the shape of dismembered bodies, blood-stained parts of uniform, and discarded equipment. I must say I was surprised to find that the trenches were extremely filthy. The straw in the dug-outs was old and malodorous, and must have been crawling with vermin. I believe that the plague of lice from which everybody in the trenches, be he never so cleanly in his personal habit, suffers more or less, was introduced by the German soldiers who had been brought from Poland, notoriously the most vermin-ridden country in the world. There were an extraordinary number of letters, documents, books, and newspapers scattered about. In some places the flooring of the trench disappeared under the litter. Our Intelligence must have spent weeks in going over this material. Such labours are well expended, however. Has not Von der Goltz himself, in his book on War, told us of the value of such captures of letters and documents to the Intelligence branch of the army ?

The *Volkscharakter*, as the Germans say, finds very definite expression in the trenches constructed by the Germans, the French, and the British. I do not propose to make comparisons, which are always in-

vidious, and which, moreover, might involve me in paths where I should find the blue pencil of the Censor blocking my passage. The German, with his craze for organization and his love of bodily ease, builds a solid trench, admirably suited, one must admit, to the purposes of this war. But I am one of those who contend that there is such a thing as over-organization, and I am inclined to believe that the German, with all his elaborations of trench warfare, his cemented trenches, his " super-barbed-wire," his iron-doored ammunition stores, overlades his organization with detail.

The exquisite neatness of the French mind shows itself clearly in the perfect orderliness of the French trenches, with tidily bricked flooring, the sides lined with plaited branches or rabbit netting. The French trenches contain the largest dug-outs to be found on this front—deep subterranean caves, tremendously solid in construction, with sometimes as many as three or four layers of massive tree-trunks laid across the roof. I think that the perfect network of communication and support trenches, which are always found about trench-lines constructed by the French, denote a certain æstheticism in the French mind.

The British trenches are the least elaborate of the trenches of the three belligerents. Nothing that would make for efficiency in them is sacrificed to comfort, and the striving, first and last, is to evolve a defence work that not only affords adequate protection to the men, but is equally well suited for an offensive as well as a defensive. Both the Germans and the French, thanks to the universal service

system, have large stocks of workmen—navvies, carpenters, engineers, and the like—who have been called to the colours, who, though not first-class fighting-men, can be usefully employed in squads on trench work. We, on the other hand, with our army recruited haphazard, must take our resources as we find them. The pioneers, who have done magnificently in this war, cannot be expected to do all the digging and construction work that trench warfare demands; their efforts must be supplemented by the soldiers themselves, some of whom, by chance, may be labourers with their hands, many of whom, however, are not.

But we can never regard the training of our army as finished. We started the war with the merest skeleton of an army, so that we were compelled, even while we fought, to expand it into a great Continental force. Therefore, it often happens that the British soldier is more usefully employed in practising bombing, or taking a machine-gun course, or learning to manipulate a trench mortar, than in adding to his bodily comfort in a trench which already fulfils its primary object—that of affording him shelter, or enabling him to beat off an assault, and of being easy to get out of in the attack. These are considerations which should be borne in mind when one hears invidious comparisons between the comfort of the German trenches and the more Spartan simplicity of ours.

Not that there are not many very comfortable dug-outs and shelters in our trenches. I dined in the officers' mess in some trenches in the Ypres salient one night in a dug-out furnished with cushioned seats, a

trap in the wall with a practicable glass window through to the " kitchen " (a fire contained between six bricks in the open behind the trench !), where the dishes were handed through, excellent lighting in the shape of an acetylene lamp, and, by way of table decorations, some beautiful roses, fresh from the ruined gardens of Ypres, in 18-pounder shell-cases. The menu was as *soigné* as the dining-room. Here it is:

Soup
Pork Chops.
Haricots Verts.
Potatoes.
Stewed Pears and Cream.
Coffee.

Wines.
Red Wine of the Country.
Armentières Beer.
Black and White Whisky.

Liqueurs.
Ration Rum.
Benedictine.
Kümmel.

After dinner we retired to the company commander's dug-out, which I found to be as comfortable as the mess-room. It was sunk to one-half below the ground level; it had a boarded floor, a brass bedstead with a spring mattress, a wash-hand stand, a large mirror and a big settee. Like the mess-room, it was lit by acetylene.

The Captain was musical, and it was with tears in his voice that he related to me the tragedy of the piano. It appears that in the only room remaining in a ruined house on one of the roads leading out of

Ypres he had located a piano, a cottage piano, sadly out of tune, it is true, from its long exposure to the weather, but otherwise sound in wind and limb. The Captain, a practical man, found no difficulty in procuring a cart and some willing hands to cart the piano by night up to his dug-out in the support trench. Everything was ready for the transfer when disaster, in the shape of a German shell, overtook the plan. Three German shells fell into the ruins of the house containing the piano, and of those three shells one went into the very vitals of the instrument. When the musical-minded Captain visited the spot, he found house and garden strewn with pieces of piano.

You must picture the trenches as deep, rather narrow gangways, which are much more like street excavations than anything else one can imagine. Some are dug down in the soil, but many of them are only a foot or two in the ground, the parapet being built up with sandbags, as in many parts of our line, especially in Flanders, the water lies too close to the surface to allow of deep digging. The bottom of the trench has a wooden flooring composed of " grids," as they are called, footways made of short pieces of wood nailed laterally on planks placed edgeways.

A deep broad step is cut in the parapet and boarded over. It looks like a deep window-seat. This is the " fire-stand," where the look-out men are posted at the loopholes to fire at the enemy. In most parts of the line there is but little rifle-fire by day, save for sniping, as neither side can expose its men by daylight, even for a momentary shot, without grave risk.

Round and about the fire-stand the whole life of the soldier in the trenches centres. While his comrade takes his turn of duty at the parapet he sleeps on the fire-stand, or cooks his food over fires, or cleans his rifle, or writes a letter home. Shelters, that the men call "funk-holes"—long holes scraped out of the side of the trench and holding two or three men—give him a dry place to sleep in and protection from the rain. But should the funk-holes be full in rainy weather, the soldier has his waterproof sheet, issued with his equipment, and thus covered he will not hesitate to lie down and sleep in the wet.

What with traverses and communication trenches and outposts, what with second and third lines and support trenches, the firing-line is such a winding maze that it is utterly impossible to get a comprehensive view of it as a whole. A walk round the trenches of a single company, which will take you a good half-hour, leaves you with a confused mass of impressions: of rather grimy figures, looking very business-like with their bandoliers strapped crosswise over their overcoats, their rifles by their sides, standing at the parapet; of men in all stages of undress, cooking, eating, washing, writing, in the narrow trench; of faces, seen white against the dark background of a dug-out, strained to a telephone which wails fretfully with a puny whine like the toot of a child's trumpet; of officers in shirt-sleeves and trench boots going their rounds or writing reports amid thousands of flies in a shelter. . . .

You walk up a trench and down a trench, you see the angular outline of machine-guns under their canvas covers in their emplacements, you are shown case upon

case of ammunition, bombs, and grenades, large and small, and rocket-like cartridges which are flare-lights.

It is so unutterably strange to find all this life, this vast preparation and organization, going forward in the open country where, but a twelvemonth back, the peasants were gathering the harvest, to know that it was going forward before you came, and will go forward after you have left. With such feelings of bewilderment, I fancy, must the traveller, in the early days of gold-mining, have come upon the mining-camps that sprang up in a day in the midst of barren wastes, and stood, in incredulous amazement, watching the ceaseless activity of a great host of humans returned to the era of the troglodyte.

Neither by day nor by night are the trenches restful. Seldom a day or a night goes by without the "whoosh" of a shell or the clumsy rush of a trench-mortar bomb. The hollow reports of the rifles never cease. Scarcely an afternoon passes, should the weather not be misty, but the firmament quakes with the rapid reverberations of the anti-aircraft guns. "Pom-pom-pom-pom-pom" is their note, sharp and unmistakable, as they throw circles of snow-white smoke-puffs about the aeroplanes soaring high in the sky.

The firing-line by night is restless as a storm-tossed sea. One dark and starless night in June I climbed a commanding height which afforded a wonderful view of a great part of our line. A thin crescent of yellow moon hung low on the skyline. A cold east wind rustled through the trees. Far below me in the plain a never-ceasing spout of brilliant green-white star-shells marked the winding course of the British and German lines.

It was an unforgettable picture. For one brief moment a desolate ridge, broken with the jagged silhouette of ruined houses, stood out hard and clear before my eyes, and then was blotted out as a flare fell earthward and died. The ragged outline of a shattered belfry was revealed for a fraction of time, black and sinister as a Doré glimpse of Hell, and then melted away into the surrounding darkness. The soft soughing of the wind in the trees was mingled with an incessant dull thrumming from the plain. Now it rose in a swelling burst of sound, from the right, from the left, from the centre, of the darkness at my feet; now it died away into single blows that echoed noisily in their isolation.

Sometimes the spout of star-shells ran dry, and for a minute or two all the plain lay swathed in its pall of darkness. Then silently, swiftly, a flare would wing its way aloft, and once more unbare the plain of death to view.

Guns boomed now and then from the distance. Along the blurred line of the horizon fitful bursts of light blazed up and died, like lightning in a summer sky. Sometimes the blaze was orange, sometimes yellow, and the air throbbed to the ear.

So the night dragged on towards the lemon dawn, with star-shells and distant shell-bursts and the throb of musketry in the plain. With the coming of the light the flares were seen no more, but the angry drumming of rifles never ceased. Daybreak showed the crumbling towers of Ypres, with the smoke of shell-bursts encircling them like a funeral wreath, but the morning mists enshrouded the trenches in the plain.

CHAPTER X

THE COMRADESHIP OF THE TRENCHES

" All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip . . .
Through joy and blindness he shall know,
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor shell shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will."

(" *Into Battle*," *by Captain Julian Grenfell, killed in action, Ypres, May*, 1915.)

The firing-line is the touchstone of character. It is the final instance. There is no appeal beyond it. A man may have shown himself at home to be the best of officers, self-possessed, self-reliant, conscientious, thoughtful for his men; but half an hour's " frightfulness " at the front can undo the good impression made in months of home training. A good sergeant will relieve an officer of a great deal of routine in ordinary circumstances, but when the company comes under fire the sergeant will, like the men, lean unconsciously on the moral strength of the officer.

No man can hope to be eternally master of his nerves. Modern shell-fire wears the nerves away. A man who would lead his platoon fearlessly into the jaws of hell may feel himself inwardly cringing when

he hears the long high whistle of a shell, mingling with the ominous hiss that means it is nearing the end of its journey. But if a man is what the army calls " a good officer," the first thought that will rise to the surface in him when he comes under fire is, " The men."

He will know that, almost automatically, the men are watching him to see what he will do. Be they the toughest of veterans, and he the greenest of " subs.," there is always a subconscious disposition in the soldier under fire to mould himself on the example given by an officer. An officer who is always exhorting his men to be careful (and by this I do not mean the officer who takes sensible measures to check the irrepressible foolhardiness of the British soldier under fire), who indulges in exaggerated demonstrations of horror when a shell shatters a man to fragments at his very elbow, will " rot " the finest company. The men will begin to think before they act, and in consequence lose that singleness of purpose that takes the soldier straight to his appointed goal, that makes just the difference between good and bad troops.

The firing-line is a strange place. There are few situations in life where a man is called upon to hold himself permanently in check. There are emergencies in civil life where a man must subordinate his feelings to a higher interest, but only in war is he compelled to make the perpetual sacrifice of his feelings, to face again and again an ordeal which perhaps never loses its terrors for him.

Do you realize the weight of responsibility resting on the shoulders of the Regimental Officer in war ?

Here is a situation he is frequently called upon to face. A shell falls right into the midst of his platoon as he is leading his men to or from the trenches. Maybe the men are fresh from home, and this sudden horror that cleaves its bloody path through their ranks is their first taste of war.

There is one man in that platoon who must not lose his head. That is the officer, boy though he be. Those raw and mangled corpses, those groaning, whimpering men that strew the ground, may affright the rank and file; they may make no visible impression on him. In his hands repose the lives of a couple of hundred men. He owes them not only to those men themselves, but to the State. He must maintain his calm, so that the men shall come to see with him that this is but a common incident of war; he must decide whether to put the men under cover or to march straight on; he must collect the survivors, and form them up again; he must, in short, take command for the moment, not only of his own feelings, but of those of his men as well. Though a senseless terror, which highly strung men who come under shell-fire for the first time know all too well, creep over him, he must not show it. He must play the veteran, though the heavens fall in.

The whole relationship between officer and man in our army is based on incidents like these. To get the best out of his men, an officer must show them that he does not fear to do what he demands of them. Seldom, if ever, is a stout-hearted officer " let down." His example endures, even after he is gone. More than once, I am sure, the souls of our officers, slain in

battle, have paused, as they winged their way homewards, to contemplate with pride their men, their officers all dead, holding on in an obliterated trench, sustained in their resolution by the lesson their dead leaders taught them.

On countless occasions in this war the teachings of the Regimental Officer have borne fruit, even after he himself had joined the great majority. In the assault on Neuve Chapelle in March the leading companies of the 1st 39th Garhwalis lost all their officers in the first ten minutes. But the brave little Nepalese hillmen never wavered. They had seen their officers die at the head of their companies. They remembered . . . and it kept them firm. In the same historic fight the Scottish Rifles lost all their officers save one, Lieutenant Somervail, a Second Lieutenant of Special Reserve. But the men of this splendid regiment, whose tradition is that there shall be no surrender, went on behind their non-commissioned officers, despite heavy losses, against barbed wire and machine-guns, "moulding themselves," as their regimental sergeant-major said to me afterwards, "on the glorious example of their officers." When we recaptured at Hooge on August 9 the positions we lost on July 30, a party of twenty-five men of the 2nd Durham Light Infantry, under the command of Lance-Corporal Smith, were lost in the dense smoke of battle, and held out alone in an obliterated trench for more than twenty-four hours, without orders, without connection with the rest of the troops, and only came away when they saw a fresh line being dug behind the line they were holding. The officers of this fine bat-

talion had created in their men's minds the proper idea of the functions of an officer, so that, when there were no officers left to lead, this young lance-corporal stepped forward and " carried on " in the best traditions of the service.

In the firing-line you get down to bedrock. Character tells. The cult is of the " stout fellow," the " thruster." The men will vaguely admire the clever strategy of their Generals which enabled the soldier to sing:

> " We gave them hell
> At Neuve Chapelle.
> Here we are again !"

But their outspoken praise of any one General will always be traceable back to qualities of personal bravery that he has displayed. If they admire and respect Sir John French, it is because they recall him on the South African veld, because they remember him sitting on the roadside with them among the shells during the retreat from Mons. If they think a world of Sir Douglas Haig, it is likewise because they have seen him in the midst of his men on many critical occasions, not forgetting that historic afternoon in the first battle of Ypres, when the Commander-in-Chief and Sir Douglas Haig, waiting at Hooge, heard the news that the Germans had broken our line, and later that the 2nd Worcesters had saved the day. In present circumstances practically the only Generals that come into direct contact with the men are the Brigadiers, and I have found that the Brigadiers who are the best loved are those who are constantly making the round of the trenches, who show

the men that they are willing to expose themselves to the same perils as they ask the men to incur.

I have been on many a long round of trenches with the Brigadiers through mud and water and evil smells, along roads in view of the Germans where bullets sang and snapped, across fields where shells were plumping, right up to the firing-line, where "whizz-bangs" were demolishing the parapet. I have often found myself admiring the physical endurance and the calm courage of these Brigadiers—who are not all young men—and have read the reflection of my own thought in the eyes of the men in the trenches who saluted as we passed.

It is in the firing-line that the relationship between officer and man, which it has taken so many decades to build up in the British Army, comes to full fruition. Its essence is the spirit of the playground. I am sure that the British officer is to his men, more than anything else, the captain of the team. The game is stern, the stakes are high, but the spirit is the old one: "Buck up! and play the game!"

Officer and man live together in closer companionship than ever was possible before they entered the firing-line. Their bond of mutual confidence is sealed by a thousand recollections of dangers faced together, of assaults side by side against the enemy, of perilous patrols at night. The daily tragedies of the trenches unite them still closer, drawing them together as men sleeping in the open will huddle up for warmth.

A young Captain was in his dug-out in the trenches one day, when word came back to him that one of his men had been sniped. He hurried out and along the

trench to the spot indicated. As he came to a traverse, a man sprang out of a "funk-hole." "Don't go round there, sir," he said; "there's a sniper watching that traverse. He's just got one of the men." In a feeling of spontaneous sympathy the young officer went on. As he rounded the traverse in sight of his man, who had just expired on the floor of the trench, the sniper's rifle cracked again, and the officer collapsed with a bullet through the body.

There was no doctor in the trench at the time. The wounded man's comrades, who examined him, found that he had been shot through the abdomen. The only chance of life was to leave him where he lay. So, while a message was sent down for the doctor, his men built a shelter over him in the open trench.

Food or drink are fatal in the case of grave internal wounds like this. The wounded man was racked with thirst, but all they could do was to moisten his lips from time to time with a damp handkerchief. The men in his company went about their duties with set faces, for, one and all, they loved their Captain. His servant was in despair, and watched him in his shelter. His best friend in the regiment, the Captain of another company, sat with him until evening, when he had to go to take his company back into reserve.

That night the wounded man died. One who saw him laid to rest in the little burial-ground of the battalion by a ruined farm says the grief of his men at the graveside was poignant to witness. When the dead man first took over the company it was slack and unruly, the worst company in the battalion.

The new man who succeeded him told me it was the best company he had ever seen, for the spirit of the dead officer was living in every man. Such are the relations of officer and man; such are the little dramas that keep friendship green in our army in the field.

The British soldier's indifference to danger, while it is one of his finest qualities, is often the despair of his officer. The Irish regiments are the worst. Their recklessness is proverbial. An officer in one of the Irish battalions—he was a "ranker," and therefore knew his subject—told me some amazing instances of the complete indifference of his men to the dangers of their situation. Crossing a railway on one occasion, in full view of the Germans, he came upon a party of men engaged in setting up bottles along the line. To his vigorous inquiry as to what they were doing, they disingenuously replied that they were setting up targets to shoot at from an angle of the trench! If the Germans had turned on a machine-gun down the line, not one of those men would have escaped alive.

I have had more than one experience myself of the British soldier's indifference to danger. When I was going up to some trenches in the Ypres salient one day, the guide, a particularly stolid-looking private, stopped suddenly on a road and said: "Will you go by the road or the trench, sir?" Of course, I had not the least choice, not knowing the ground, so I asked him which was the shorter way. "The road's a long way the shorter," he replied. So we went by the road. But when I told the officers up at the mess in the trenches that I had come by that road they stared, and asked if we had been shelled. I said we

had not. Then they told me that that particular stretch of road was one of the most "unhealthy" spots in the neighbourhood by day.

The guide was interrogated. "Some takes the road, and some the trench," he said. "But don't you know they are always shelling that road?" the officer asked. "They do put one over now and again," the man replied, "but the road's a deal shorter, sir!" "You'll find it a short-cut to heaven one of these days, if you go on using that road," the officer said, whereat the man grinned broadly.

The relationship between courage and discretion is always a difficult thing in war. Many lives have been lost, I fear, in this war because officers, particularly those new to the game, would not take cover when a shell came over, lest they might appear "rattled." In point of fact, a man may often escape a wound, or perhaps even save his life, by taking refuge in a dug-out or seeking refuge behind a tree or a wall, when he hears by the diminishing speed of a shell that it is about to burst in his neighbourhood.

A very few weeks in the field, however, makes most men fatalistic about shell-fire—a man sees so often that life and death hang on a fraction of a second, on a foot this way or that. Going up to trenches one afternoon with two companions in a particularly lively part of our line, we had to cross a little bridge over a ditch. Twenty yards from this bridge was a dug-out in which the headquarters of the battalion I had come to visit was situated. I had just reached the dug-out, when I heard the slow drone of a shell. As I turned towards the direction from which the

sound came the shell burst square over the bridge we had crossed less than a minute before, and two other shells fell close by within a few seconds. With the utmost satisfaction, I must admit, I dwelt on the thought that, if I had delayed for a minute to fasten a boot-lace or to light a cigarette, I should in all probability have been on that bridge just when those three shells burst there.

Two officers were following one another in cars through a ruined village close behind our lines. At the end of the village they were stopped by a military policeman, who warned them that the road was being shelled. The officer in the leading car decided that he would wait for the " strafing " to cease; the other, who was in a hurry, proceeded to his destination by another route. On arriving he found a telephone message to say that the first car had been struck square by a shell a few minutes after he had left, and that the officer and his chauffeur had been killed on the spot.

The rivet that holds the regimental officers together, their common solicitude as their common pride, are the men. The officer in the trenches is thinking continually of the men, of their safety, of their comfort, of their health, of their behaviour under fire. Get an officer talking about a " show," and he will never tire of telling you how well the men behaved, how Private This is a most " gallant feller," and Private That, " my best bomber," died. " The men did d—— well," " The men were splendid." How often have I heard phrases like these !

Pride in their officers, pride in their regiment, flashes

out quaintly in the men's talk. Listen to a group of soldiers describing a fight.

"The Captain 'e says . . ." "Lieutenant Blank ups with his rifle quick-like. . . ." "The Major? 'E's a fair nut, 'e is. First over the parapet 'e was, and going that fast that, what with the bombs you 'ave round you, and them you carry in a box, we couldn't 'ardly keep up with 'im!"

This is a sergeant-major on the death of his Colonel:

"Yes, sir," he says in his deep, slow voice, "our Colonel was hit, the best soldier that ever commanded this battalion. He was a grand man. 'Sergeant-major,' he says to me, 'sergeant-major, I'm just going up to have a look round.' Well, he didn't come back. Then a man coming down, wounded, says in a great fuss: 'Sergeant-major, it's something awful up there. The Colonel's killed,' he says, 'and the Adjutant, too!' 'You've got the wind up, my man,' I said to the chap, not believing him. 'You run along to the dressing-station and get your head bound up. You haven't any brains to spare, remember.' But, all the same, I went up to see for myself what was happening. It was true, sure enough. There was the Colonel, mortal bad he was, and the Adjutant killed. Ah, he was a grand gentleman, our Colonel! There were not many like him, sir! We could ill spare him!"

When you have seen officers and men together in the trenches you understand Francis Grenfell's dying words: "Tell them I died happy. I loved my squadron." Those noble words are the epitome of the lifework of the Regimental Officer.

Out of this close friendship between officer and

man springs a great spirit of *camaraderie* between officers in the trenches. It is no small test of character for a group of men of different stations, ages, and dispositions to live in the closest possible association, as men do in the trenches, for days at a time, and never to fail to display that mutual forbearance and readiness to serve which help men over the rough paths of life. During the months I have been at the front I have been privileged, at different times, to see a great deal of officers together in the trenches. I have spent nights with them in their dug-outs; I have had various meals with them at their messes; I have accompanied them on their rounds. What has struck me more than anything has been the real spirit of co-operation existing between them. This takes the form not only of the sharing of the minor comforts of life, such as the pooling of gifts sent out from home—which was only to be expected—but of a continual striving to help one another, to render one another small services in their duties, to cover up, if needs be, one another's shortcomings, and, above all, to make things smooth for the new man.

On the other hand, active service appears to accentuate inter-regimental rivalry. Trenches are a great theme for criticism. There *may* be a battalion in our army in the field to-day that has given a written testimony to the troops from which it has " taken over " of the splendid condition in which the trenches were left. If there is, I have not found it. The relieving battalion *always* roundly abuses its predecessor for the state of the trenches. In every trench I have been in I have been shown with pride the improvements

made by the actual tenants: "You should have seen the state of things those bloody fellows in the Blankshires left behind! . . ." I once heard the Commander of the Second Army get in a sly dig at a brigade on parade regarding this inevitable trench criticism. It was a very human touch in a formal address, and evoked broad smiles from the audience, both officers and men.

Nothing could be more charming than the atmosphere of a trench mess. The Colonel is back at the battalion headquarters with the Adjutant, so that the senior officer present is the Captain in command of the company holding the particular section of trench, or at most a Major. The rest of the company at table will consist of two or three subalterns, the machine-gun officer, possibly the doctor, and sometimes the Chaplain. The "Padre" is, properly speaking, attached to the Field Ambulance, but one often meets these gallant men in the firing-line, making their tour of the men under their charge as conscientiously as the Captain makes his round of his trenches.

You must picture the company seated on rough benches or ammunition-boxes (here and there one finds a chair salved from a wrecked farm) round a makeshift table, knocked together by the orderlies, with sheets of newspaper in lieu of a tablecloth. Most of the food is put on the table at once—sardines in an enamel soup-plate, cold tongue ditto, ration bread (rather mouldy if we are in an isolated post), some kind of hot meat on an enamel dish, and enamel cups for drinks. The conversation is sprightly, mostly of the events of the day. The presence of the "Padre" curbs the freedom of the language to some

extent, though, Heaven knows, he, poor man, has already discovered that the army swears terribly in Flanders. "I can stand a good deal," a "Padre" said to me one day, "but I draw the line firmly at some words."

This imperturbable young man with the shaven head and the yellow moustache, whose dinner is being continually interrupted by gruff voices issuing from the darkness at the door of the dug-out, "Can I speak to the Captain?" "A message for the Captain!" "About those blankets for the men, sir . . ." is responsible for the safety of this stretch of trench and its tenants. He transacts his business through the door of the dug-out and eats his dinner at the same time, always tranquilly. The hole in the back of his tunic is a souvenir of a piece of high-explosive shell in the shoulder, and the cut in the knee of his trousers is due to the same cause. A boy with yellow hair and pink cheeks, who is talking telescopic rifles with the doctor, is Lord of the Hate Squad—in other words, in charge of the snipers. Only that afternoon I had seen him, with a companion, amid bullets snapping viciously against a ruined wall, patiently waiting for a certain sniping Hun whose habitat was in a tree. He had not got him that day, but the Hate Squad had their eye on the sniper, and sooner or later his number would go up.

A burst of laughter from the other end of the table greets a story told with infinite gusto by the machine-gun officer, a phlegmatic young man with the ribbon of the Military Cross on his tunic. He knows German well, and one of his amusements is to revile the

Germans in their own tongue. He is recounting some of the epithets he applies to them.

Our army in the field has managed to scrape together a whole vocabulary of trench slang. It is a strange medley of English, French, and German. That immortal phrase "Gott strafe England" has given to trench slang "strafing" as a substantive, and "to straf" as a verb. As you have probably already gathered from reading soldiers' letters in the newspapers, to be "strafed" is to be bombarded by the enemy—in short, to suffer in any way at the hands of the Hun. The morning and evening "straf" is equivalent to the morning and evening "frightfulness" or "hate," the liveliness with which the German guns issue in the day and march it out at its close. The Germans apply the words "*Morgengruss*" (morning greeting) and "*Abendsegen*" (evening benediction) to these periodical outbursts from our side. "Hate," used in this sense, undoubtedly owes its origin to that amusing sketch in *Punch*, showing a German family indulging in its "morning hate." This clever cartoon had an immense vogue at the front, and I have seen it frequently hanging up on the walls of dug-outs and billets.

To be "crumped"—another expression often heard in the trenches—is to be bombarded with heavy howitzer shells, an onomatopœic word. To be "archied" —a Royal Flying Corps phrase—is to be shelled by anti-aircraft guns, which are universally known as "Archibalds" or "Archies."

A whole vocabulary has grown up about the guns which are playing such a rôle in this war. "Gunning"

is freely used as a synonym for " shelling "; the heavy guns are, *tout court*, " the heavies "; the howitzers are the " hows." There is a wild and picturesque crop of nicknames to denote the different kinds of guns and shells. Thus, our heaviest howitzer is known as " Grandmother " or " Grandma," while the next below it in size is " Mother." A certain German long-range naval gun, whose shells have the peculiarity of bursting before you hear them arrive, is known as " Percy." German high-explosive shrapnel shells are " white hopes " or " white swans." " Jack Johnsons," " Black Marias," and " coal-boxes " are used rather indiscriminately for different kinds of heavy shells, while " whizz-bangs," the small 15-pounder shell thrown by a mountain-gun, are also called " pip-squeaks." The men in the firing-line got so free with their nicknames for shells in official reports at one time that a list of officially recognized and distinctive nicknames for German shells was drawn up and issued for use by some divisions.

From the French trench slang derives one or two expressions. " To function " (*fonctionner*) is one. A man " functions " as liaison officer, a trench-pump will not " function." " *Dégommer* " is often used to denote the action of relieving an officer of his command. It is, of course, pure French slang, and is invariably used in this sense in the French Army. This word has a curious derivation. It was, I believe, first applied by the *Humanité* in its old sledge-hammer days under the late Jean Jaures, to denote Aristide Briand, most fiercely hated of all French Ministers because, at the outset of his career, he was

in the ranks of those revolutionary Socialists whom he had to combat so fiercely when in office. All public men who came under the ban of the *Humanité* had their nicknames, and were never referred to by anything else. Thus M. Lépine, the late Prefect of Police of Paris, was spoken of as *le sinistre gnome*, M. Clemenceau as *Le Tigre*, and M. Briand, after his fall from power as the result of his suppression of the railway strike, as *Le Dégommé*—"the ungummed one," the innuendo being that he had clung to office until he was forcibly torn from power.

Talk at the trench mess, of course, principally turns round such trench topics as the men and their caprices, the date of relief, leave. There is "grousing" about the slowness of promotion, about the Mentions in Despatches. But there is no gloom. It is an eternal wonder to me that the officers in the trenches are so consistently cheerful. Neither death nor danger depresses their spirits; the monotony does not make them despondent. They do not hide the fact that they hate shell-fire, or that they could contemplate a more agreeable existence than living in a ditch in Flanders. Only they realize that they have a job to do, and they do it. And they will go on doing it until their work is done.

The Germans have realized too late what they have lost by sacrificing the respect of their enemies. Our soldiers in the trenches make no concealment of their admiration of the efficiency and bravery of the Germans as fighters, but as men they loathe and despise them. The British soldier is an easy-going fellow, and the Germans, had they only regarded the con-

ventions of soldiering, might have prevented much of the bitterness which this war has engendered. Even as it is, though the anger of our men against their treacherous enemy makes them a formidable and pitiless foe in the assault with the bayonet, they are gentle and paternal with their prisoners.

I have actually seen the British escort giving German prisoners cigarettes. I have read letters written by German prisoners waiting in our lines in France to be sent with a convoy to England, dwelling on the good treatment they were receiving, and describing how they were given the same rations as their escort, including cigarettes, and were being taught football by their captors. The extraordinary *agapes* that took place during the Christmas truce, when British and Germans, for a few brief hours, fraternized between the lines, could not, I believe, occur again, except possibly with the Saxons, who have behaved decently in this war, and for whom our men have a soft corner in their hearts. Since Christmas the hideous crime of the asphyxiating gas has drifted in a foul miasma between us and our enemy. No man who fought in the second battle of Ypres and saw the sufferings of the gas victims would give his hand to a German to-day. But the psychology of the British soldier is so enigmatic that the prophet would run grave risk of coming to grief who ventured to predict what the British soldier will do where his heart is concerned. Nevertheless, this much I would say—that to-day the British soldier neither fears nor trusts the German. He knows that, man for man, he is his superior; he looks forward to the time

"Daily Mail" phot.

GERMAN PRISONERS.

when, gun for gun and shell for shell, the same will be true.

With the British and German lines in places only forty yards or less apart, there is always a certain amount of communication between ourselves and the enemy. The Germans generally contrive to find out which of our battalions is holding the trenches opposite, and often greet the reliefs with the name of their regiment. When a famous Highland battalion was going away, after a long stay in one portion of the line, the Germans played them out of the trenches with "Mary of Argyll," very well rendered on the cornet. The Jocks were hugely amused, and gave the performer a round of applause to reward his efforts.

A large sheet of water which had formed about some shell-holes outside the trenches of the Rifle Brigade in the winter afforded both sides a great deal of amusement. One night a patrol found a rough wooden model of a German submarine floating in the pond, flying a paper flag on which were inscribed the words: "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!" The submarine was "captured," and for the next few days several handy fellows in the battalion of the R.B.'s holding the front line spent all their spare time in constructing a model battleship. This was subsequently launched at night flying a pennant with the words: "Why don't you come out and fight?" A night or two after our patrols found that the pennant had been removed from the battleship, and replaced by a flag bearing the words: "Germania rules the waves!" In the meantime the battle of Heligoland was fought. The model was accordingly rescued

from the pond, suitably disfigured to represent a sinking ship, "BLUECHER" painted in large letters on its side, and the flag replaced by one bearing these words: "Has your Government told you about this ship?" The blow told: the model disappeared, and the jest ended.

The exchange of news is very popular. I was in the front line one afternoon when a message arrived from the division announcing the surrender of German South-West Africa, and adding: "Perhaps the enemy might like to know this."

The suggestion was immediately acted upon. The news was translated into German, "Gott strafe England!" was added to give it a proper German ring, and when I went down the men were painting the message in white on a large blackboard, which was going to be hoisted on the parapet facing the German trench. The Germans attacked this part of the line the next day, whether as the result of our message I am unable to say.

The high comradeship of our trenches is enhanced by many little touches redolent of home. The British soldier is a homing-bird, and he loves to perpetuate the memory of places that are dear to him in his surroundings in the trenches. The troops in the Ploegsteert lines—"Plug Street" of wide renown—who inaugurated the custom of giving street names to trenches with their "Strand" and "Fleet Street" and "Hyde Park Corner," in reality hit upon a very practical solution of the great difficulty of providing suitable identification for the network of trenches which was growing up all along our lines. Now the

custom is general, and the neatly inscribed sign-boards which meet your eyes in so many parts of the line evoke recollections of busy streets and squares in London and provincial towns, and of gallant commanders, some of whom have "gone west," whose names are perpetuated in countless "houses" and "corners" and "farms" along our line.

Since I came to France I have made it my business to visit the trenches in almost every part of the line. There are those who say: "When you have seen one trench, you have seen them all." Of a truth, outwardly there is little enough difference between them all—the same swarm of dust-coloured figures, the same sandbags, the same timber-work, the same mud, the same strip of No Man's Land ahead, the same devastation behind, the same noises echoing hollow all about. But to me each strip of trench is another corner of the great heart of Britain, where Britons of all stamps—the fair-haired Saxon, the darker Norman, the Scot, the Celt, from many climes, of many races—are playing the part in the work of Empire which is every Briton's birthright to-day. The bond uniting them in the steel line which the German hordes have vainly tried to break is the companionship of the Table Round of the Empire, the bulwark of the world's civilization against the most formidable menace ever launched by the powers of darkness.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRINCE OF WALES

One evening, a few years ago, I stood on the platform of the *Gare du Nord*, and saw the arrival of the London train that was bringing the young Prince of Wales to Paris for a stay of a few months before going to Magdalen College, Oxford. The arrival was quite informal. There was no red carpet, no guard of honour, only a few old friends of King Edward, like the Marquis de Breteuil, with whom the Prince was going to live, and M. Louis Lépine, most Parisian of police prefects. "*Comme tout ça fait penser à son grand-père!*" one of those present said to me as the train steamed in. "*Il aimait Paris, celui-là!*"

Because of his grandfather, Paris from the first opened her heart wide to the young Prince, a fair-haired slip of a boy, as I saw him that day at the *Gare du Nord*, acknowledging with just a trace of embarrassment the cordial welcome of the friends of that other "Prince de Galles." The newspapers very chivalrously acceded to his wish that his movements should be ignored, and for a few brief months the Prince of Wales enjoyed that magic experience which everyone would give the best years of his life to be able to taste again, the first acquaintanceship with Paris. From the windows of the Breteuil mansion in the

Avenue du Bois he saw spring creeping into the trees of the Bois de Boulogne, while in London winter still drearily held sway. Many a time I met him swinging along the paths of the Bois with his tutor, the tall Mr. Hansell, or caught a glimpse of him driving out with one of the young Breteuils.

During his stay in Paris the young Prince went to the theatre, and visited the museums, and played tennis at the courts of the Bois de Boulogne or the Ile de Puteaux. M. Georges Cain, Curator of the Carnavalet Museum, and the greatest living authority on antiquarian Paris, led him into all the historic nooks and corners; M. Lépine took him round the Halles and the queer cabarets and lodging-houses surrounding the markets; while with Mr. Hansell he made excursions into the wider France—to Reims, and Amiens, and Tours, of cathedral fame; to the château country of the Loire; to Avignon and the Palace of the Popes; to Brest and Toulon, where M. Delcassé, another faithful friend of *Edouard Sept*, showed him the French Navy at work.

In the months he spent amongst the French I know the Prince learnt to love and admire France—eternal France, in President Poincaré's noble phrase. In a conversation which I was privileged to have with the Prince in London before he went out to the front, he spoke with affectionate remembrance of his days in Paris, with indignation at the German air-raids on the city. Now, by a strange dispensation of Providence, the Prince of Wales is in France again, but the France he finds to-day is not the France he left a year or two ago.

He finds Paris tranquil, but sobered—*digne*, in the phrase of a Parisian. He finds France vibrating with a passion she has not known since the cry, "*La Patrie en danger!*" brought the tatterdemalions of the Revolution flocking in their thousands to take service under the *Tricouleur*. He finds in France England's stanch and helpful Ally, finds the *entente cordiale* which his grandfather built up with such infinite tact and inexhaustible patience welded into a firm alliance by the blood of Frenchman and Briton spilled in defence of a common ideal of liberty. When, in the fulness of time, Edward, Prince of Wales, shall succeed, by the grace of God, to the throne of his fathers, History shall count it a wise and far-seeing decision that sent the Heir-Apparent into the field to play his part in those great events which shall throw their shadow over his reign and the reign of his sons and grandsons.

Directly the war broke out the Prince of Wales, like every other Englishman of spirit, was burning to play his part; but the sending of the Prince to the front was undoubtedly something in the nature of an experiment. History and precedent were against such a course—an argument often adduced by authorities when there is a question of checking the ardour of youth.

Yet if there were those who doubted the wisdom of exposing the Prince of Wales to the perils and hardships of campaigning, there was one person thoroughly and completely convinced as to the propriety of his going to the front. That person was the Prince himself; and to objectors his rejoinder, eminently prac-

tical and modest, was something to the effect that he had brothers at home if anything happened to him.

It speaks volumes for the energy of the young Prince that, although he only joined the Grenadier Guards at the beginning of the war, he should have rapidly passed through the necessary preliminary training, and then have succeeded in overcoming any opposition to his dearest wish.

In the earliest days of the war the Prince was seen taking his turn on the guard at St. James's, and performing the ordinary routine duty of a Guards Subaltern.

This, however, was not to last long, and soon the happy day came when the *London Gazette* announced the appointment of Lieutenant the Prince of Wales, K.G., Grenadier Guards, to be A.D.C. to Field-Marshal Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the Field; and the Prince left for General Headquarters.

Then for a long time we heard no more of the Prince of Wales. Now and again a soldier's letter from the front contained a brief mention of his doings—that the Prince had been in the trenches or had visited a hospital—and an occasional paragraph in the French newspapers revealed the fact that he had been in the French or Belgian lines. But it was the Commander-in-Chief himself who first broke the silence anent the Prince's doings. In his despatch dealing with the battle of Neuve Chapelle he mentioned that the Prince of Wales had acted as *liaison* officer with the First Army during that engagement, and paid a tribute to the zeal and quickness with which the Prince had

discharged his duties, and the deep interest he took in the comfort and general welfare of the men. It was the Prince of Wales himself who brought that despatch to London, and Londoners were able to see for themselves how he had filled out and hardened during the months he had spent with the army in the field. His eyes shone with the light of health, his face was tanned with exposure to the rain and wind of winter and the pale sunshine of spring in Flanders, and his whole being exuded that bodily fitness and mental vigour which are the symptoms of a man whose heart is in his work.

This was my impression of the Prince when I saw him in the field myself one wet afternoon in March. It was when the Second Army, with whom I was on that particular occasion, was carrying out a local attack against the Germans in the northern part of our line. The valley was heavy with mist, and reverberating with the sound of our guns carrying out the artillery preparation, our shrapnel bursting with a gleam of orange-coloured fire against the white haze enveloping the ridge we were going to attack.

As I stood and watched the fascinating spectacle—I find there is no sight which holds the attention more than the play of bursting shells—I noticed two young officers ascending the road leading to the point where a group of Generals and Staff Officers was posted. The new-comers stalked up the steep path at a good pace, and as they passed I saw that the one who was leading was the Prince of Wales. He was in field kit, with long trousers and putties, after the manner of the Guards, and was wearing his accoutrements

strapped on over his "British warm." He appeared to be soaked through, and his walk through the steamy air had made him very hot. He saluted punctiliously as he passed the group of Generals, then took up his position with his companion and, unstrapping his glasses, began to survey the scene that unfolded itself in the valley.

As darkness was falling I saw him again, walking along a road where soldiers were standing to, preparatory to marching away to take their turn in the trenches. As the men came running out of the roadside hovels where they had been billeted, hoisting their packs on their backs or tugging at their strappings, they recognized the Prince, who acknowledged their salutes with a smile. He stopped for a minute and talked to one or two of the men, then walked on through the gathering shadows to a neat little racing-car standing by the roadside, in which he was going to drive himself and his companion back to G.H.Q.

For many months the Prince lived at G.H.Q. He shared quarters with Lieutenant-Colonel S. L. Barry and Lord Claud Hamilton, and was a member of the Commander-in-Chief's mess. Colonel Barry, a distinguished cavalry officer and a delightful companion, arranges the details of the Prince's plans at the front, and his visits to different parts of our lines and to the French and Belgian Armies; while in Lord Claud Hamilton, the youngest brother of the Duke of Abercorn, who won the D.S.O. for gallantry while serving with his regiment, the Grenadier Guards, in the trenches, the Prince has a comrade of his own age.

With that gift of easy self-effacement which our

Public Schools and 'Varsity inculcate, the Prince slipped without any apparent difficulty into his place in Sir John French's small and intimate household at G.H.Q. All ceremonial was waived as far as the Prince was concerned, to his own great relief, and he was treated like any other officer of the personal Staff. Perfectly natural as he is, the Prince has small liking for the elaborations of Court etiquette in private life. He has shown that, at State functions, he can acquit himself with dignity, but excessive demonstrations of respect in private life embarrass him, for, first and last, he is English, as English in mind and manner as he is in appearance.

The Prince is English in his love of fresh air and hard exercise and bodily fitness. Anything gross and unwieldy and fat and slothful is repugnant to him. He takes a tremendous amount of exercise at the front. He is always in training. He eats and drinks very little. He thinks nothing of going for a run before breakfast, riding until luncheon, then walking ten miles or so, with a three-mile run home to finish up with. No doubt his intense mental alertness and energy, a positively Celtic quickness of temperament, have something to do with this love of physical exercise; but I believe it mainly springs from pride of body, the clean and sane and English desire to be perfectly healthy.

But the Prince of Wales is nothing of a prig or a faddist. He has arranged his life in this healthful way of his own initiative entirely, with a quiet decision that is rather surprising in a young man who has the world at his feet. But then the Prince of

Wales knows his own mind, and acts, as far as he can, according to his own ideas. His manners are charming, he is quite unaffected and absolutely unspoilt, and he talks freely in a manner that betrays a strongly marked sense of humour.

Of fear, I think, he knows nothing. If he had had his way, he would be permanently in the firing-line. He has been with his Grenadiers in the trenches. He has been under shell-fire. But the experience did not suffice him. He wants to savour in person the perils and hardships which so many of his friends in the army (whom he regards with unconcealed and frankly expressed envy) are experiencing day after day. "I want to see a shell burst really close," he said on one occasion. "I want to see what it is like." Someone pointed out that a shell had burst over the headquarters in which he had been lunching that day. "I know," he exclaimed quite wrathfully, "but I didn't see it!"

When an engagement is on, as he cannot obviously be allowed to go to the firing-line (in the Flanders flats there is no chance of a close view of a battle with even a reasonable chance of safety from shell-fire), he sometimes visits a casualty clearing-station, where the wounded are being brought in. He goes round the stretchers while the doctors are examining the wounds, and talks freely with the men about their experiences. Many a wounded man sent down from the front has been taken to hospital in the Prince's own car, with the Prince himself at the steering-wheel. Infinitely good-natured as he is, he is always doing good turns like this to casual people he meets on the

road as he motors about between the armies in the execution of his duties.

The Prince is no shirker. Nor is he content with being given merely nominal tasks which he could scramble through anyhow if he pleased. Everything he does he does with all his heart, for he wants to play his part in this war, not from ostentation or personal ambition, but a sheer sense of duty. He follows the operations of the armies, both the French and the British, and makes his own maps. He keeps a diary of all he sees. If he cannot be present in person with the men in the front line, he is with them in spirit night and day, and follows their movements, their successes, and their mishaps, as closely as any officer of the General Staff.

His thoughts are often with the Fleet, in which he began his career. I believe the Prince had once hoped that he might have put to sea with Sir John Jellicoe, as his younger brother was privileged to do. His friends in the navy send him long letters full of the most amusing gossip about the " shows " they have been in, about their life at sea, about the adventures of old shipmates of the Prince. The Prince, who, like all real naval men, will talk naval " shop " for hours without ever being bored, devours these letters, and sometimes reads out extracts to his friends at G.H.Q.

When he was at G.H.Q. the Prince of Wales learnt all there was to know about the organization of the army. He visited in person all the different services at G.H.Q., the bathing-stations behind the front, the railheads, the ammunition-parks, the R.E. stores.

He went down the lines of communication, and saw for himself the unloading and distribution of supplies. He inspected the hospitals at the base. He has been to see the French Army at work. He has paid many visits to the Belgian lines. In everything he has seen he has displayed the same intense interest, the same absorbing thirst for information.

He has done service with his own regiment, the Grenadier Guards, has lived with them in the trenches and in billets. If there is an officer with the British in the field to-day who knows what the army has accomplished, not only in the way of organized efficiency, but of uncomplaining endurance of hardships and danger, it is the Prince of Wales.

In the summer the Prince of Wales left G.H.Q., and was attached to the First Army, with which he went through a regular course of training as a Staff Officer. For some time he was on the Intelligence. Here his work was to read through the German newspapers, and the letters and documents taken from prisoners or the dead, and translate any passages that appeared to furnish useful information. When I was going down to visit a portion of our line towards the south in June, it was the Prince of Wales, who was then serving in the Q.M.G. branch of the First Army, who handed over our passes.

It is the fate of all writers who would describe the lives of Princes to be exposed to the charge of sycophancy. Yet there is no life for a plant of this growth in the perfectly natural and wholesome atmosphere surrounding the Prince of Wales at the front. He is not playing at soldiering. His periods of leave are

few and far between. His life must often be very monotonous by reason of the restrictions which considerations of State must necessarily place upon his young and ardent temperament. Nevertheless, he sticks to his work, because he feels that his place is with our army in France. In after years, when the land over which the young Prince will one day rule is reaping the harvest of that peace for which our men in Flanders endured and died, the months which Edward, Prince of Wales, spent, of his own wish, with the army in the field will surely form another and a closer tie between him and the Empire.

CHAPTER XII

THE GUARDS IN FLANDERS.

" . . . They (the 3rd French Chasseurs) had neared the cross-road, when Wellington's voice was heard clear above the storm, 'Stand up, Guards!' Then from the shelter of the way-side banks rose the line of Maitland's brigade of Guards, four deep and fifteen hundred strong, which poured a withering volley into the square, and charging, swept them out of the combat."

(" The Guards at Waterloo." From *The Life of Wellington*, by the Right Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., M.P.)

" TANGIER," " Namur," " Gibraltar," " Blenheim," " Malplaquet," " Dettingen," " Talavera," " Fuentes d'Onor," " Waterloo," " Alma," " Inkerman," " Tel-el-Kebir," " South Africa "—what a host of gallant memories these battle honours of the Guards call forth, what a glorious procession of heroic figures defiling through history amid the fire and smoke of a hundred deathless fights! Men come and go in war. The regiment remains. Its battle honours are the symbol of what it was, the promise of what it will be.

No body of troops in the British Army has redeemed the promise of its battle honours more illustriously in this war than the Guards. Marlborough, Wellington, Raglan, who saw in their careers, each in his turn, that the Guards were true to the promise of their colours, must look down from the Elysian Fields

in proud admiration of the way in which the Guards in this war have once more maintained the untarnished splendour of their name. It will be with rightful satisfaction that the historian of the future will record how, in an unmilitary age, the British Army proved itself not unmindful of its great traditions, but he will be able to add that no regiments showed themselves more highly imbued with respect for the noblest qualities of the soldier than the Guards.

It is this same respect for soldierly attributes that is the outstanding feature of the Guards on active service. It is not a pose. It is not an affectation of the officers. It is not an individual whim. It is an attitude of mind that pervades the Guards as a whole, from their most senior officer down to the youngest drummer-boy. It is not a creation of this war, for then surely it would have withered for lack of fertile soil, by reason of the number of original Guardsmen who have died. On the contrary, it is seen as strong and as virile as ever, even in men who abandoned their civilian pursuits to take service with the Guards. The young men of good birth who have received commissions in the Guards after the outbreak of war, and the recruits who come out with drafts—novices all, not only to the war, but also to the Guards—are saturated with this manly respect for soldierly virtues.

In what do these soldierly virtues consist ? First and foremost, in courage. Courage, indeed, is their alpha and omega, for it is the basis of all merit in the soldier. The standard that the Guards set, the standard that they most emulate and most admire,

is the courage that recks not of danger, the courage that thinks first of the common cause, then of the fellow-man, and of self last; the courage that leads the forlorn hope as blithely as the storm, that is uncomplaining in hardships and humane after victory; the courage that hides itself beneath a bushel when the ordeal is past.

Then there is discipline. The strictest discipline on duty, a certain friendly good-fellowship off duty—these are the relations between officers and men of the Guards, as, of course, they are between officers and men right through the British Army. In the field the Guards officer is a guardian to his men. He is eternally preoccupied with their comfort in the trenches and in the billets; he furthers their sports and games, often out of his own pocket; he takes a general interest in their welfare. He is debonair and democratic in his dealings with them off duty, and they respect the familiarity thus allowed them, and in time of need repay their leaders' generous solicitude by a loyalty and a devotion that are beyond all praise.

The strict attention to duty which is enforced in the Guards is shown in the personal neatness of the men and the fine condition of their trenches. Be the conditions never so bad, and water never so scarce, a Guardsman in the field will always contrive to present a clean appearance. If his uniform is stained and patched, his puttees will be neatly tied and his boots, cumbrous though they are, will be scraped clean of mud. The army knows that a well-turned-out battalion, clean in appearance and punctilious about

saluting, is a good fighting battalion. It has been the ambition of the Guards to set an example to the army in this respect.

The Guards trenches are famous all along our line. Deep, and well made, and clean, and as safe as they can be made, they are named after London streets familiar to the Guards on their "walkings out" on Sunday evenings—Piccadilly and Bond Street and Edgware Road and Praed Street. When the Guards are in their trenches they are kept scrupulously neat and tidy; the greatest attention is paid to hygiene, with the result that the plague of vermin and flies is probably less felt here than in any other part of the line.

There is a fine disdain for the shirker in the Guards. The Guards esteem it an honour to be able to fight with the Guards against the Germans, and therefore among the men there is nothing but contemptuous pity for the young fellow who prefers to loaf at home to earning the proud right to say in after years: "I was with the Guards in Flanders!" But for the Guards officer who should stay away from his battalion in the front line for any reason whatsoever, even to do useful duties in the rear, the officers have nothing but the most withering disdain.

It is no use arguing the question. It is no use pointing out to them that a man who is by temperament not a fighter can render better service to the country by serving on a Staff or doing other work behind the fighting-line. The only reply is that "they cannot imagine how the fellow can stay away from his battalion at a time like this." You feel that they are often unjust in such wholesale condemnation,

but you cannot help admiring the real Guards spirit which is reflected in this attitude of mind.

Their spirit is one of the most jealous exclusiveness. It is apparent in their mental attitude as well as in their dress. The Guards officers have succeeded in investing even their prosaic service khaki with one or two little touches that render their uniform quite distinct from that of officers of the line. In the first place, the different Guards regiments retain their distinctive button groupings in the service tunics of the officers, the buttons being arranged in ones for the Grenadier, in twos for the Coldstream, in threes for the Scots Guards, and in fours for the Irish Guards. It is etiquette that the buttons should be of dulled bronze, and as small and as unobtrusive as possible. No badges are worn on the collar, and the badge on the cap is silver and diminutive in size. Many Guards officers affect excessively baggy breeches, cut like full golfing-knickers, and worn with puttees. They are certainly distinctive, but they can hardly be said to be becoming, and are liable to get sodden and heavy from the wet in the trenches, I am told.

The Guards in the field judge life by two standards —the Guards' standard and other men's standard. There is nothing offensive to the rest of the army in their carefully studied exclusiveness. They are genuinely and generously appreciative of the undying gallantry displayed by line regiments. They show themselves friendly and companionable neighbours in the trenches, and stout and reliable comrades in action. But you will find that what they are seriously willing to concede to other regiments they will never allow

to the Guards. They have no criticism to offer if a line battalion surrenders after a most gallant stand against overpowering odds, but if you probe their minds you will find that they would naturally expect a Guards battalion in similar circumstances to fight to the last man. And the remarkable thing is that, if you examine their records in this war, you will find that this is the standard the Guards have set and lived up to.

Indeed, the Guards' spirit is not of this war. It is of another age. It is as old as chivalry itself. It was to the British Guards, if you remember, that the Frenchmen at Fontenoy said: "*Messieurs les Anglais, tirez les premiers!*" and as far as our Guards are concerned, a similar incident might occur in this war. You will never hear a Guardsman disparage the German as a fighter. He thinks the German is a bad sportsman, and, remembering Belgium and the *Lusitania*, he has a fierce joy in fighting him. But he knows he is a brave man, for our Guards, remember, saw the Prussian Guard advancing in parade order to their death at Ypres in the face of a perfect tornado of shot and shell.

"They were fine, big men all," a Guards officer who witnessed that last desperate attempt to break our line said to me, "and they walked past the corpses of their dead comrades choking their line of advance, and straight into our machine-gun fire like brave men that were not afraid to die."

It was the spirit of the Guards in Marlborough's day that sent the Guardsman William Lettler across the river at Lille to cut the chains of the drawbridge.

It was the same spirit that carried the Guards forward at Talavera with such impetuosity that a catastrophe was only narrowly averted, that at Waterloo welded them into a solid wall of steel. It was the Guards' spirit that transformed the little Irishman, Michael O'Leary, into an epic hero; that inspired the Coldstreams at Ypres, the Scots Guards at Festubert, to fight to the last man.

This book is not a history, and I must leave the story of the Guards' achievements in this war to an abler pen than mine. From the outset they have been in the very thick of the fighting. At Mons we find the famous Guards Brigade—2nd Grenadiers, 2nd and 3rd Coldstream and 1st Irish Guards—with the Second Division, and with the First Division the 1st Coldstream and the 2nd Scots Guards. With Sir Henry Rawlinson's Seventh Division in Belgium—that splendidly gallant division of whose exploits in the early days of the war we heard so little—were the 1st Grenadiers and the 2nd Scots Guards. At Mons the Guards battalions played their part gallantly in beating back the desperate attempt of the Germans to overwhelm "French's contemptible little army" with vastly superior numbers.

No battle honour will figure more gloriously in years to come on the colours of the four battalions of the Guards Brigade than Landrecies. The magnificent stand which the brigade, under General Scott-Kerr, made in this little town averted a disaster and inflicted enormous losses on the enemy. The Germans delivered a surprise attack on the place in the mist and darkness of the night of August 25, hoping,

by dint of tremendously superior numbers, to overwhelm the Guards and burst through our line. The Guards hastily improvised a defence, and throughout the night, through hours of bloody and desperate hand-to-hand fighting in the narrow streets, held their own. At last the Germans realized that the surprise had failed, and withdrew, leaving their dead piled up in ramparts on the cobblestones.

With the rest of the British Army, sorely pressed and exhausted, but not beaten, the Guards fell back from Mons. We hear of the Guards Brigade again in the woods of Villers-Cotterets, fighting a desperate rear-guard action, engaged at close quarters, as they love to be. Here the Irish Guards, on active service for the first time in this war—and right gallantly have they acquitted themselves—lost their Colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, a man as brave as he was big

When fortune changed, and to the stern ordeal of the retreat and the bad news from Belgium succeeded the spirited pursuit of Von Kluck falling back baffled from Paris, once more we find the Guards in the centre of things. They fought in the battle of the Marne, and advanced with the rest of the army to the Aisne. Carrying out Sir John French's historic order to "make good the Aisne," the Guards Brigade had a stiff fight at Chavonne, but managed to cross the river at this place, after overcoming severe German resistance in the woods, by ferrying a battalion over the stream.

In the first great struggle about Ypres in October, 1914, the Guards—like every other British regiment engaged there, be it said—gave of their best in the

defence of our line. The 2nd Scots Guards, holding the trenches at Kruseik, north-east of Zandvoorde, came in for the brunt of the smashing attempt of the Germans to pierce the line of the Seventh Division. The enemy actually managed to break through, but the gap was closed and the bulk of the storming party killed or made prisoner. The 2nd Scots Guards counter-attacked with splendid dash, and the German attempt failed, but in a subsequent vigorous assault by the enemy the gallant battalion was all but exterminated. That was on October 25. On October 31—by Sir John French's own admission, the critical day of the battle—when the Germans broke through the line of the First Division, the 1st Coldstreams held on till the end, and were practically destroyed.

Meanwhile, the Guards Brigade, which had come into line on the previous evening, was fighting desperately on the left of the First Division. I have already mentioned in my chapter on Sir John French how the 2nd Worcester Regiment, by its gallant charge at Gheluvelt, saved the British Army on that fateful 31st of October. For a time the peril was averted. But after a short respite from their persevering efforts to obey the Emperor's command to win Ypres at all costs, the Germans attacked again on November 6, this time against the Klein Zillebeke position, defended by the 2nd and the Guards Brigades and a French division—the Ninth—under General Moussy.

General Scott-Kerr, who commanded the Guards Brigade at Mons, wounded at Villers-Cotterets, relinquished the command to Brigadier-General the Earl

of Cavan, who came out from England to take up the appointment. Lord Cavan commanded at Ypres. The achievements of the Guards Brigade in this war will for ever be associated with his name. A short, stoutly built little man, there is nothing particularly suggestive of the great soldier in his personal appearance, but a few minutes' talk with him will show you the fine courage in his keen eyes, the tremendous virility in his language and gestures, that bespeak the leader of men.

Cavan is the Guards' spirit incarnate. All his admiration goes to the fearless man. I wish I could tell you in his own words, as he told me, the now familiar story of how Mike O'Leary of the Irish Guards won the V.C. at Cuinchy. The General (who believes that where the Guards are there he should also be) witnessed the incident himself. He tells how he saw O'Leary, right ahead of his company, dash up one bank and kill the Germans there, then dash up another and kill the Germans there, then, going round the back, seize two Germans working a machine-gun by the scruff of the neck, and with either hand gripping their collars firmly, call to his comrades to relieve him of his prisoners. "A most extraordinary fellow," says the General. "By rights he should have been killed a dozen times."

Lord Cavan's own fearlessness and complete indifference to danger are a by-word in the army. His officers swear by him. His men adore him, regarding him, with true Guards' exclusiveness, as a treasured possession, a peculiar acquisition of the Guards. More than once he has been mentioned in despatches. This

is what the Commander-in-Chief, on the recommendation of Sir Douglas Haig, wrote of his conduct at the first battle of Ypres: "He was conspicuous for the skill, coolness, and courage with which he led his troops, and for the successful manner in which he dealt with many critical situations." Lord Cavan has no enemies, I believe, and no one who has seen him in the field will think that what I have written in praise of him is excessive.

A sudden German attack on November 6 drove back the troops on the left of the Guards Brigade, which was left exposed. A splendid charge by the Household Cavalry brought a British cavalry brigade to fill the gap on the left of the Guards, and the next day the Guards delivered a successful counter-attack, but could not retain the ground they had won against the overwhelming German odds.

On November 11 the final desperate effort of the Germans to break through to the sea, in the shape of the attack of the Prussian Guard, failed, and the battle came to a close. The First Brigade, with which were the 1st Coldstream and the 1st Scots Guards, with the rest of the First Division, stemmed the tide and threw the flower of the German Army back in confusion. The First Brigade left its commander on that blood-stained field in the person of the gallant Brigadier-General Fitzclarence, V.C., who, as I have told elsewhere, was the author of the famous order to the 2nd Worcesters that saved the day at Ypres on October 31.

The next serious fighting in which the Guards were involved was to the south, in the wet and dreary black

country opposite La Bassée. In December the First Division was ordered up to Givenchy to relieve the Indian Corps, which had been having a very bad time, and on December 21 the First Brigade found itself holding the trenches from Givenchy down to the La Bassée Canal. The prompt intervention of this fine division enabled our line, from which the Indians had been partially forced back, to be re-established.

This ugly and sinister region from Givenchy to Cuinchy, situated on the other side of the La Bassée Canal, was destined to be the home of the Guards for many months, and the scene of some of their most heroic exploits in this war. On January 24 the First Brigade, under Brigadier-General Cecil Lowther, found itself holding the line in the Cuinchy brick-fields opposite the famous La Bassée Railway triangle formed by the Béthune-La Bassée line and the Lens-La Bassée line, which joins the first in two branches. The 1st Scots Guards and the 1st Coldstreams were in the trenches. On the 25th the Germans opened a heavy bombardment of the Guards' trenches, which were practically destroyed. The line was broken, and the Germans managed to secure a footing in the brick-fields. A counter-attack, delivered with great gallantry by the Black Watch, the Cameron Highlanders, and the King's Royal Rifles, succeeded in partially clearing our second line. The First Brigade lost heavily, and was relieved during the night.

On February 1 Cavan's Guards Brigade was holding the line through the Cuinchy brick-fields. At half-past two in the morning the 2nd Coldstreams were driven out of their trenches, but managed to hold out

till daylight in a position close to their old trench. A counter-attack launched in the small hours by some of the Irish Guards and Coldstreams was checked by the enemy's rifle-fire.

Another counter-attack was arranged for 10.15 a.m. It was preceded by a splendid artillery preparation—the kind of ruthless and accurate rain of high-explosive projectiles that puts a fine heart into men waiting to attack. Then the storming-party went forward, a grand array of big, stalwart men in whose great hands their rifles with bayonets fixed seemed as light and as inconsiderable as toothpicks. Captain A. Leigh Bennett led the way at the head of fifty of the 2nd Coldstreams, bent on "getting their own back"; following came Second-Lieutenant F. F. Graham with thirty Irish Guards, with whom went one Michael O'Leary in the front line, and a party of Royal Engineers with barbed wire in rolls, and sandbags, to "organize" the trenches that might fall into our hands.

It was a magnificent piece of work. The Guards were irresistible. They swept like an avalanche over the lost trench, bayoneting their way. All the ground lost was retaken, and another trench besides, while two machine-guns and thirty-two prisoners fell into our hands. It was here that Michael O'Leary performed his prodigious exploit.

But the achievements of the Guards were not confined to brilliance in the open with the bayonet. They proved themselves well-disciplined, uncomplaining, resourceful, and patient through the long winter months in the trenches in this sordid region, which

vies with the Ypres salient as being the ugliest, wettest, and most depressing portion of our whole line.

Neuve Chapelle saw the 1st Grenadiers and 2nd Scots Guards in line with the Seventh Division. The latter stages of that historic fight made great demands on the courage and tenacity of the troops engaged, and these two famous battalions maintained their high reputation for both. The Guards were not engaged in the second battle of Ypres. Their services were required farther south, where the attack on the Fromelles ridge, to support the French "push" in the Artois, was preparing. In the operations which began on May 9, and, continuing with intervals until the middle of June, resulted in the gain of a mile or two of front and the capture of several hundred prisoners, all the brigades in which the Guards are serving were concerned.

After the attack by the Seventh Division on May 15 on the German trenches south of Richebourg l'Avoué, the greater part of a company of the 2nd Scots Guards, including Captain Sir Frederick Fitzwygram, was found to be missing. Presently word came down to the brigade—I think from the Canadians, who had taken over the line here—that some Scots Guards' graves had been located. Would the brigade send up an officer to investigate ?

An officer was despatched. He was destined to elucidate the mystery of the missing company. He did not find Fitzwygram, who had been wounded and captured. But he found the dead bodies of sixty Scots Guards lying huddled together in the open, the

centre of a grim circle of some 200 German corpses, and close by two rough white crosses marking the spot where the Canadians had laid two Scots Guards officers to rest.

The Scots Guards, who had advanced side by side with the Border Regiment, had outdistanced their fellows. They were found dead, amid heaps of empty cartridge cases, with their rifles still grasped in their stiffened fingers, in the place where they had last been seen through a drifting haze of high-explosive vapours, standing shoulder to shoulder together under a murderous fire poured in on them from three sides. Soaked by the rain and blackened by the sun, their bodies were not beautiful to look upon, but monarch never had nobler lying-in-state than those sixty Guardsmen dead on the coarse grass of the dreary Flanders plain.

It has been my privilege to have seen a good deal of the Guards in this war. You would scarcely recognize in these battle-stained warriors the spruce Guardsmen of St. James's and the Park. The first Guardsmen I met in this war were a battalion of Irish Guards and a battalion of the Coldstreams on an evening in May, as they were marching down a road near Chocques towards the firing-line. Their creased caps and stained khaki, their dull green web equipment and short brown rifles, made them look at the first superficial glance like any other Regular troops. But something about their stride, the way they bore themselves, their alignment (though they were marching easy), made me look again. That magnificent physique, that brave poise of the head, that clear,

cool look of the eye—that could only be of the Guards!

They had come a long way. It was a close, warm evening, and the roads were a smother of choking dust. The Guards wore their caps pushed back off their foreheads, and their tunics unbuttoned at the neck, showing a patch of white skin where the deep tan of their faces and necks ended. The perspiration poured off them in streams. It traced little channels in the dust that lay thick on their sunburnt cheeks. Every now and then a man, with a grunt, would wipe the sweat from his eyes, and in the same motion administer that little hoist to his pack that is peculiar to the British soldier marching with a full load.

Many a time, on German manœuvres, I have passed a regiment on the march, like these Guardsmen, in the stifling dust of a summer day. I have been all but choked by the sour odour which the breeze has wafted over from the marching men, and have been only too glad to follow the advice of the old hands to put the wind between them and me. But these British Guardsmen, grimy and travel-stained though they were on the outside, were clean of body, and the air about them was pure. Looking at them closer, I saw that under the dust their haversacks were neatly packed and fastened, their uniform well-fitting and whole, their puttees beautifully tied. These things may seem trifles to you who will read this in the sheltered atmosphere of England, where one man in khaki with a gun seems as another. But they are the mark of a good battalion, and, noting them on that dusty French road, with the guns drumming faintly in

the distance and an aeroplane droning aloft, I knew that the trenches for which those troops were bound would be well held.

One of the most stirring military spectacles it has ever been my good-fortune to witness was a parade of some battalions of the Guards before the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, and M. Millerand, the French Minister of War. I have seen many reviews of the Prussian Guard before the German Emperor, both in Berlin and in Potsdam. My eye has been fascinated by the perfect precision of the movements of the Prussian drill, the long lines of heads thrown stiffly over at the left shoulder at the same angle, of feet flung forward in the *Paradeschritt* with such mathematical exactitude that they seemed as one movement, of white-gloved hands swinging to and fro in absolute accord.

I have watched the rippling line of the French infantry swing past the saluting-point at Longchamps reviews with a wiry elasticity that gave better promise of efficiency in the field than the stiff precision of the Prussian, and have delighted in the brilliant array of colours, the red and blue and gold and silver against the deep green background of the historic racecourse.

But I have never seen, and never wish to see, a more inspiring picture than those four battalions of Guards drawn up in their drab khaki on a heath in Flanders over against the Tricolour and the Union Jack flying side by side. An ancient military tradition, a high purpose and perfect physical condition, never combined to produce a more sublime spectacle of troops than this. There was no display, no searching

after cheap effects. The Guards were there in their khaki, as they had come from the trenches; the officers carried no swords; the colours were guarded in churches at home. The Grenadiers and Coldstreams had their drums and fifes; the Scots Guards their pipers, wearing the proud red tartan of the ancient House of Stuart. The four battalions stood there in four solid phalanxes, unbeautiful and undecorative, save when, to the crash of the opening bars of the "Marseillaise," three distinct ripples ran through those serried ranks, and with a dazzling flash of steel the Guards presented arms.

Memories of Mons and Landrecies, of Klein Zillebeke and Cuinchy and Festubert, went shuddering by, pale shadows escaping from the prison of the imagination, as the stalwart giants of the King's Company of the Grenadiers led off the march past. The drums and fifes crashed through "The British Grenadiers" again and again and again before the serried files of men, marching with an iron tread that fairly shook the earth, had all gone by, and the skirling of the pipes proclaimed the approach of the Scots Guards.

There were faces in that procession like faces on a Greek frieze, fighters all, radiant with youth and strength and determination to conquer or readiness to die, men who had looked Death in the eyes, and, in that they had withstood the ordeal, had risen above man's puny fears of the Unknown. It was a spectacle to thrill a soldier, to inspire a poet, to make an Englishman vibrate with pride at the thought that these are his brothers.

The army in the field loves the Guards. It is not

jealous of their exclusiveness, for the Guards have shown in this war that they are not content to rest upon their laurels. The army trusts the Guards, for it knows that, when in a critical hour Wellington's voice shall be heard once more above the storm crying, "Stand up, Guards!" the Guards will rise again in a solid wall of steel, as invulnerable as their phalanx at Waterloo.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ARBITERS OF VICTORY

" . . . My guns are better than the German guns . . . for instance, my 15-inch shell is equivalent to their 17-inch. The issue is now one between Krupp's and Birmingham."

(Field-Marshal Sir John French to Mr. James O'Grady, M.P., quoted in the *Daily News*, August 23, 1915.)

" Too-too ! Too-too ! Too-too !"

" 'Ul-loh ?" (wearily).

" Too-too ! Too-too ! Too-too !" (with insistence).

" 'Ul-loh ?" (with vexation). " 'Ul-loh ? 'Ul-loh ?"

The sounds issued forth from a low, cramped dug-out, where a perspiring orderly, squatting on a box, huddled over a crepitating telephone-receiver—not the " gentlemanly article " of your City office or my lady's boudoir, but a Brobdingnagian kind of instrument. Fragments of conversation drifted out of the hole:

" 'Oo ? . . . I carn't 'ear yer. . . . Oh ! Yessir ! Yessir ! Yessir !"

Then a sentence was bawled and repeated from mouth to mouth till it reached the orderly standing at the end of the trench. *" The Major of the Blankshires sends 'is compliments to Captain X, and there's a German working-party be'ind the village clearly visible. Will Captain X send a few rounds over ?"*

The Captain turned wearily to the subaltern by his side (Cambridge O.T.C., out since March, keen as mustard). "Did you ever see such fellows?" he said. Then, to the orderly: "My compliments to the Major, and we have been watching that working-party for the past half-hour. Unfortunately, it is out of range. But tell him, you can, that we have just dispersed another working-party over by the bridge!"

This message is shouted from mouth to mouth, the telephone toots again, but even before the Major in his dug-out a mile away has had his answer, the battery is called up once more from another quarter, with the request to "turn on for a bit" in some other direction.

So it goes on all day, and every day. The guns are the big brothers of the trenches. To them the front line, like the small boy in a London street row, appeals when bullied by the German artillery. To them the men in the trenches look for protection against working-parties preparing new "frightfulness," against spying aircraft, against undue activity on the part of the *minenwerfer*.

The gunners keep guard over the front line in a paternal and benevolent, not to say patronizing spirit. Their business it is to find places from which they can keep an eye on the enemy, watch the effect of their shells, and see what the enemy's guns are doing. No matter that these places are exposed; no matter that the Germans search for them with their guns like caddies "beating" the heather for a lost ball; no matter that, sooner or later, they will be brought

down about the observers' ears. Observation is a vital part of artillery work. It saves British lives; it kills Germans.

When German "frightfulness" oversteps the bounds of what is average and bearable, "retaliation" is the word that goes back to the guns. When there are bursts of German "liveliness" going on all along the line, the battery telephones (so the men in the fire-trenches tell me) are so busy that to call up a battery is like trying to get the box-office of the Palace Theatre on the telephone at dinner-time on a Saturday night.

This word "retaliation" has a fine ring about it. To men with nerves jaded by a long spell of shelling with heavy artillery it means a fresh lease of endurance. To the least imaginative it conjures up a picture of the Germans, exulting in their superiority of artillery, watching in fascination from their parapets their "Jack Johnsons" and "Black Marias" ploughing, among eddies of black smoke, great rifts in our trench-lines, starting back in terror as, with a whistling screech, the shells begin to arrive from the opposite direction.

Nothing puts life into weary troops like the sound of their own shells screaming through the air and mingling with the noise of the enemy's guns. Nothing in the same way puts a greater strain on men, even the most seasoned and hardened troops, than to have to sit still under a fierce bombardment, and to know that their guns must remain inactive because ammunition is limited to so many rounds a day per gun.

Our success at Hooge on August 9 showed us,

Big shell exploding on a road in France. German soldiers in foreground.

albeit on a very small scale, what our infantry, adequately supported by artillery, can achieve. The Hooge affair was of quite minor importance, and had next to no bearing on the general situation. It was, however, of the deepest interest to all of us on the Western front, for at this engagement, almost for the first time, the guns had a free hand in the matter of ammunition. It was due to their thorough and devastating preliminary bombardment and their splendid support afterwards that our infantry were able to recapture the lost trenches, and to hold them against all German attempts to win them back.

The battalions who took part in the attack against Hooge were brimful of gratitude towards the gunners. Not only had the guns done the work of cutting the barbed wire and of destroying the enemy's machine-guns and defences in the most thorough manner, but the timing of the different operations of the artillery —the preliminary bombardment, the lifting on the front line and then the *tir de barrage* (to prevent the Germans from sending up reinforcements)—was absolutely perfect. As a result, the attacking files were able to push on freely with no fear of coming under their own fire, for, with each position won, the rain of shells lifted and poured down farther ahead.

A bombardment like this makes men optimistic. The infantry, waiting in the paling darkness before dawn for the preliminary bombardment to do its work, were elated as the heavy shells went plumping into the German trenches, as the curtain of smoke from the high-explosive drifted thicker and thicker in the twilight.

The men's comments were fierce and heartfelt. "Ah! they're getting it at last, the ——s! That'll learn 'em! Boom!" (as a shell exploded with a deafening crash). And when the storming-party went forward it was irresistible. The men "had their tails up," as the army says. Not only did they hurl the Germans out of their trenches, but they held the positions. Every time the Germans massed for a counter-attack our guns were ready for them, and swept the attack away before it had properly developed.

I was able to appreciate the elation of the men who fought at Hooge, because I had already seen, in past months, the evil effects of the shortage of shells. As I talked to these gallant fellows, full of their stories of the fight, I kept thinking of a position I had visited months before where, day after day, the Germans kept up an almost incessant bombardment with shells of all calibres. As so much of their strategy, their action was aimed at achieving a moral effect, like their senseless raids on undefended English seaside resorts. At this particular position they had no chance of breaking through our line, yet, so much do they believe in the effect of high-explosives in undermining the *moral* of troops, that they fired away ammunition from their guns in the most reckless fashion.

I spent an afternoon in a dug-out there with a Colonel, a fine, hearty body of a man, while the shells passed almost continuously over our heads or burst noisily, with whizzing fragments of hot metal, in our immediate vicinity. He expressed himself very sagely

on this question of shells. "Of course," he said, "perpetual bombardment like this is a great strain on the men. But they are stout fellows, and they stand it all right. What does upset them, though, is the silence of our guns. My men see that a little energy on the part of our guns promptly reduces the Germans to silence. If we give the Germans shot for shot, and sometimes, for a change, two shells to their one, they become as meek as lambs. What my men lack is the heartening sound of our own shells. When our guns do retaliate, their fire is feeble, and soon dies away. A well-fed man is a better fighter than a fellow with an empty belly. So troops who know that they have the weight of metal behind them may be counted upon to make a better showing than men who feel that they are not properly supported."

But I do not intend to go further into the shell controversy here. Hooge showed us that the tide has turned. The shells which our guns fired that day were better than anything the gunners had ever seen before. The issue, in the Commander-in-Chief's expressive phrase, is now between Krupp's and Birmingham. Birmingham will win if England understands that, were every man left in England and every woman from this moment to give their services to the making of munitions of war, even then our Generals could not conscientiously say they were certain that the supply would be sufficient.

In our former wars the gunners reaped the richest harvest of decorations, for they most often found themselves in a tight corner, and the rule of the Royal Artillery is, "Never lose a gun!" If you want a

contrast between the war of movement and the war of positions, between August, 1914, and August, 1915, you have but to look at the gunners then, when the war was in the open, and now, when the belligerents have sat down to a siege. The foaming horses, the jingling accoutrements, the mud-bespattered guns, the gunners falling man by man about their gun—this splendid picture of war, painted on many a glorious page of our military history, has been replaced—temporarily, I know—by as strange a blend of peace and war as can be seen in the field to-day.

Not that in the main the gunner's task to-day is less perilous than before. Most of the shells that the Germans send over night and day are hunting for our batteries, searching for them principally with the aid of little maps provided by the German air observers. The Germans have to reckon with a resourceful lot of men in our gunners, however, and so skilfully are the guns hidden that more often than not the enemy's projectiles plump harmlessly into fields, and cause no greater damage than the massacre of a few dozen buttercups and daisies.

But the gunner is *toujours en vedette*. He must stay with his gun. If his battery is firing, he can take no thought of safety. He must expose himself. Shells or no shells, he must go about his duty. Thus, though the day of the race forward with the guns is over for the moment, the gunners' casualties go on steadily, in little driblets, it is true, but nevertheless mounting up to a long roll of honour that will show future generations that, in the long months of trench warfare, the Royal Artillery, true to its grand

traditions, did its work as steadfastly and gallantly as in the thrilling days of the retreat from Mons and the advance on the Marne.

The gunners have had a difficult task in Flanders. Since the battle of the Marne the great offensives on our front have been with the enemy. The Germans, even when advancing, never forget for a moment that he who goes forward may also have to fall back, and their striving has always been to secure for themselves good defensible positions from which their guns can dominate our lines. The flatness of the country has made the work of artillery observation both perilous and difficult, and the heroism with which the observation officers exposed themselves in the fighting round Ypres, at Neuve Chapelle, and at Festubert, to mention but a few concrete cases, is a chapter by itself in the roll of fame of the Royal Artillery in this war. The time has not yet come when one may write freely of this most thrilling and perilous of duties at the front, the observing for the guns, but I have seen the observation officers at their work, and feel very strongly that one cannot pass over their gallantry and tenacity in silence.

I have witnessed the growth of our artillery; with it I have passed from the discouraging days of the shell shortage to the brighter era that dawned at Hooge. I have spent many absorbingly interesting days with the gunners in the batteries, with the observation officers at their stations. I have seen in action every type of gun, every type of howitzer, big and small, used in our army to-day. I know the voices of them all—the short, sharp report of the

field-gun, the ear-splitting crash of the 4·7, the air-shaking roar of the heavy howitzer, whose shell in its passage through the air over one's head produces long-drawn-out reverberating waves of sound that resemble nothing on earth unless it be the echo of a fast motor-car rushing through miles of empty, narrow streets.

But because I have thus seen the work of our guns in the field, because I have been allowed to penetrate the *arcana* of gunnery, and to enter holy places where few save those of the craft are suffered to enter, I find myself in a dilemma. Despite the ceaseless activity of German spies in peace and war, there are still many blanks in the German information about our artillery. Far be it from me to fill them in ! Permit me, therefore, to leave the guns hidden beneath their covers, cunningly stowed away from prying eyes in their emplacements.

In a battery you get a good idea of the detachment of modern war. The effect of the war of positions is to hold off from the guns the rough-and-tumble of fighting. It happens occasionally, as in the case of the London Territorial " Heavies," surrounded and captured during the second battle of Ypres, that the tide of battle sweeps up and washes round the guns. But as a general rule the guns, in their positions behind the front, are several miles from the actual firing-line. Their rôle is practically that of the artillery of a besieging force, and they thereby acquire a fixity of tenure which must be particularly sympathetic to the gunners who remember the awful ordeal of the guns on the retreat from Mons.

A skilful fencer who has a good reach and a long

foil can keep his opponent at a distance without moving his position, without losing his calm. The gunners in this war of positions are using a foil several miles long. Their blade is constantly in play, but the enemy is kept at arm's length. Therefore, the life of the gunners is probably more ordered and stable than the life of any other formation at the front.

In a London newspaper office some years ago I used to know a cable operator who on Saturday nights, when the wires were clear, was wont to pass the time by playing cable chess with the operators at Queenstown or New York. Many an evening I have sat by his side and watched him, poring over his chessboard, with one hand on the cable-key ready to transmit his move across the wires. The sense of long distance, which that quiet cable-room, with its shaded lights, its absorbed chess enthusiast, and its ticking instrument, used to convey, has come back to me in these batteries at the front, where death goes and comes over a stretch of miles.

Among my notes of a visit to a battery of field-guns, I find the following observation: " The coolness, the savage *Sachlichkeit* (a comprehensive German word which may be rendered by ' business-likeness ') of the gunners; exposed to the constant menace of death at long range themselves, their one thought in life is to ' get back ' at the enemy on the distant horizon."

This studied efficiency in the business of slaying is indeed the dominant impression left on the mind by a view of one of these batteries in action. The officers, always neat and trim, are nonchalant and

laconic as they snap out in monosyllables the orders that carry with them winged death; the men serving the gun—just a handful of dust-coloured figures about some ironwork—go about their work swiftly and silently. A word with the telephone orderly as to range and angle and shell, a brisk order, a yellow-painted shell is whipped smartly out of its neat *caisson* standing open by the gun, its doors flung wide like two arms, as though to say, "Help yourself!" there is a snapping and a clicking of bolts and blocks, then the voice of the sergeant: "All ready to fire, sir!"

The gun is laid on its quarry. No gun fires without an object. Somewhere in the sun-bathed flats beyond, where the horizon is smudged in blue behind a curtain of dancing heat, there are men whose glass of life is all but run out. How often have I thought on this picture, in the few seconds' interval between that short phrase, "All ready to fire, sir!" and the brisk command: "No. 1 gun, fire!" . . . A group of Germans, not the fierce helmeted Huns in exquisitely neat uniforms that our artists love to show us in the illustrated papers, but vague figures in ill-fitting dirty grey that makes them look like scavengers, with trousers, showing a band of white lining, turned up over their boots, curiously long tunics unbuttoned at the throat, and little round caps, all stained with mud and sweat, their heads beneath shaved until the skin shows greyish through the pale stubble—a group of vague Unknowns waiting for death.

Perhaps they are walking up a communication trench, plodding in Indian file, silent; maybe they are sitting outside a dug-out talking of the things

which form the staple conversation of the men on both sides out here—their food, their duties, their spell of rest from the trenches, their leave, their sergeant. All are marked down by the Power that regulates these things—those that are to die, those that shall survive. Even now one is taking that step forward that shall save his life, another has tarried an instant, and for that instant's delay he shall die. The cigarette that the officer in our battery is lighting shall give the doomed ones a few seconds' respite.

The shell is in the gun, bearing in its shining and beautifully turned case that which shall release a never-ending succession of events springing from the widows and orphans which this shot shall make. In a second now it will be sped, in another second its work will be done. There will be telegrams—ill-omened and feared visitants in these days of war—arriving in German homes, in the officer's flat on the third-floor of a dull street in a garrison town, in the tenement dwelling in a Berlin slum, in a farm in Pomerania, in a wooden cottage on a pine slope in the Black Forest.

There will be tears and hysterics and black stuff and crape in the house; black-bordered announcements, headed by the Iron Cross, in newspapers beginning, "*Den Tod für Kaiser und Reich* . . ."; visits of condolence from *Onkel Fritz and Tante Frieda* in the *Gutes Zimmer* (the parlour); lonely widows and fatherless orphans, bereft sweethearts and heart-broken mothers. . . .

"No. 1 gun, fire!"

The scream of the shell cleaving the air strikes upon

the ear still reverberating from the crash of the explosion. As the breech is opened a thin vapour of smoke blows out of the gun, and vanishes in an instant, as though rejoicing to be free. The men are busied about the gun. In quick succession the other guns of the battery discharge their shots.

The officer turns on his heel. "You'd better stay to tea!" he says. "My people have sent me a birthday cake."

Give and take!—that is the philosophy of war. These gunners in their placid batteries hear death coming at them in the wind—day after day, night after night. They are matched against worthy foes—from the gunners' standpoint—fine artillery, well supplied, that shoots well. The guns are the rooks and bishops of this great game of chess. They sweep off the board any piece that comes into their field. The gun which I saw firing to-day may be discovered to-morrow before there is time to shift its position. Then a rain of shells will fall all about it, smashing in the dug-outs, slaying and maiming the devoted men whose place is by their gun.

In this trench warfare the battery is a placid place. So well concealed are the guns, so cunningly hidden, so skilfully blended in their surroundings, that one is often not aware that guns or howitzers are thrusting their noses into the air within twenty yards of where you enter. There is an air of permanency about the large solid dug-outs, a touch of homeliness about the curls of blue smoke that drift lazily aloft from the fires where the cooks are making the tea in tin "dixies."

The gunners show a certain facetiousness in naming their underground homes. "Rowton House," "Ritz Hotel," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Ocean View," are some of the names burnt in fretwork on the neat boards fixed at the entrances to the dug-outs. Within, pictures cut from the illustrated papers are hung, those of pretty ladies and the guns of other armies being more especially favoured. You are sure to find one or two men here engaged in fashioning knick-knacks, such as ash-trays or lamp-stands, out of parts of German shell sent over at the battery. I saw some of these souvenirs, one a sugar-sifter, made by one of our gunners out of the case of a shell—a very well-finished piece of work.

When heavy fighting is on, the battery, though it always preserves its outward calm, is a very busy place. When the guns concentrate during a preliminary bombardment, the gunners hardly get a moment to breathe, but keep on loading and firing, and loading and firing, while all the time fresh supplies of shells are brought up, and the piles of empty shell-cases, with their bronze burnt black at the edges, swell steadily. Then it is that the ammunition convoys stream together to the ammunition railheads, where shells, great and small, neatly packed in their wooden boxes, are lying in the goods-trains that have brought them up from the base.

Soon after the fighting at Festubert in June, I spent a morning at an ammunition railhead. The officer in charge showed me round, a pleasant young man in very old riding-breeches and a khaki shirt, who had an office, a place of wonderful contrivances in the

way of chairs and desks and pigeon-holes and shelves made out of empty shell-boxes, installed in a railway-truck. The railhead was established in a railway-siding, where, on three or four sets of metals, long trains were waiting, some full, others empty, about to return to the base to be replenished. The full trains contained the overflow. What can be safely stored is dumped out, and collected by the ammunition convoys—motor-lorries of the Mechanical Transport—which come to the railhead daily to fetch supplies, in order to bring deplenished stocks up at the front to the normal level again.

I saw, I believe, almost every form in which "villainous saltpetre digged out of the bowels of the harmless earth" is employed for the dismemberment of man. There were shells galore, from huge 4-foot howitzer shells in enormous coffin-like boxes, one to each, down to small 15-pounder shells, several to a case. There were hundreds of cases of bombs and grenades: stick-bombs, and round bombs, and square bombs; bombs for trench mortars, large and small; boxes of Verey flare-lights, and stacks of S.A.A.—that is, small arms ammunition, rifle and revolver cartridges. I was lost in admiration at the exquisite neatness of the packing—so contrived that by the simplest manipulation the shell and its charges can be lifted safely out of the box without hammering or violence of any kind.

Every day the officer in charge sends in his returns of the amount of ammunition supplied, and the amount in hand. The returns for the preceding days of fighting in the Festubert region were eloquent of

the part that artillery is playing in this war. The returns are made according to the size and description of shell.

The enormously increased importance of artillery in this war necessitates not only an unlimited supply of ammunition, but more and more new guns of the latest and heaviest types, besides the requisite increase of transport. The enormous output of ammunition from the factories in England demands extended storage accommodation at the base, and a larger service of trains for conveying the supplies from the base to the railheads at the front. The motor-lorries which bring the shell to the gun, the bullet to the rifle, the bomb to the grenadier, must be increased in number to cope with the augmented supplies. Thus, wherever you turn, whether towards the men of the new army flocking out from England, or towards the guns that are to blast for them the path to victory, you are confronted by the same process of expansion which is developing the little Expeditionary Force of Mons and the Marne into the great army upon which—who knows?—may eventually devolve the final task of liberating Europe.

CHAPTER XIV

CHILDREN OF THE RAJ

War in its old guise, the clash of warring Kings and their levies of horse and foot, with victory on the side of the stoutest blows, and triumph reckoned by the number of slain and spoils, may have faded from the European mind, but it still lingers, a brave and picturesque adventure, in the storied imagination of the East. So it happens that, of all the forces in the field to-day, none has a more knightly conception of war, as the word was understood in the days of chivalry, than the levies which India has sent to Europe to fight for the British Raj.

How old John Froissart, who loved a brave spectacle of war, would have thrilled to see the stately Sikh horsemen, as I have seen them, high turbans and tall lances silhouetted against an evening sky, defiling along a road in Flanders, trod in bygone days by many of the old chronicler's heroes—Edward of Wales, Sir Reginald Lord Cobham, Sir Walter Manny, Sir John Chandos, and the rest! How gladly he would have wandered into their camps and bivouacs, and heard from bearded Sikh and lean Pathan the stirring story of their military past, heard them speak again in the manner of his time of the great war between the Kings of Europe!

For to the Indian troops who have come to Europe to fight this war is an adventure, as wars were to the knights of old. The high sense of duty which makes them ready and willing to play their part in the defence of the Empire is not patriotism. It is loyalty, the honourable resolution to stand by the man whose bread they have eaten. In their rudimentary and picturesque way they understand very clearly the origin of the war. They talk among themselves, and write home to their villages of the unjust King of Austria, who sought to steal the kingdom of Serbia, and was therein helped by the arrogant King of Germany, who in his turn invaded the country of the King of Belgium. Hereupon the King-Emperor said, "This must not be," and summoned the Kings of Germany and Austria to make good the wrong they had accomplished. When they refused, the King-Emperor called upon his friends the Kings of France and Russia to make war upon them.

Gleefully the Indians will count the number of Kings that are on the side of the Allies in the cause of right—the King-Emperor, the King of France, the King of Russia, the King of Belgium, the King of Serbia, and, more lately, the King of Italy. Triumphantly they ask: "Shall but three Kings—those of Germany, Austria, and Turkey—prevail against six?" The position of Austria-Hungary is rather a puzzle to them. Sometimes both the King of Austria and the King of Hungary appear on the side of the foe, sometimes the King of Austria is ranged in the ranks of the Allies, owing to a confused recollection that *Australians* are fighting for the Allies in the East.

They write elaborate and often allegorical disquisitions on the origin of the war to their friends at home in India. In one case that I heard of the writer took the names of mutual acquaintances in the village at home in which the first letter corresponded with the initial letter of the names of the belligerent powers, while a dispute about a field served to illustrate the causes of the conflict.

The strangest medley of races, castes, and religions that has ever fought on one side in Europe, the Indians took the field in the cause of the King-Emperor behind their hierarchical chiefs and military leaders. The Maharajah of Kapurtala, the Maharajah of Bikanir, the Jam of Nawanagar (whom the Empire knows better as "Ranji"), the Rajah of Ratlam, the young Maharajah of Jodhpur, Maharajah Sir Pertab Singh, the Maharaj-Kumar of Kuch Behar, were among those who came to Flanders.

Among the troops were Sikhs from the Punjab, Pathans from the North-Western Frontier of India—Afridis, Mahsuds, Yussufzais, Khattaks—Punjabi Mohammedans, Dogras from the hills, Jats from the Southern Punjab and the United Provinces, Gurkhas from the hills of Nepal, Garhwali hillmen from Garhwal, and Rajputs.

Even the great Cadogan of Wellington's army, the Prince of Q.M.G.'s, might have well been appalled by the task which the commissariat department of this heterogeneous collection of races and religions represented. The Pathans, being Mohammedans, will drink no wine or spirits; the Sikhs, who have their own religion, may drink wine, but may not smoke; the

Gurkhas may do both, but have other ceremonial practices which must be scrupulously observed. Beef is anathema to the Hindu, bacon to the Mohammedan; indeed, pork in any form is abhorrent to all save the lowest caste of Indian. Therefore, the flesh of goats, slain in a prescribed ritual form, and specially prepared, had to take the place of the bully-beef ration for the majority of the Indian contingent. There was no rum ration for the Mohammedan, no cigarette or tobacco ration for the Sikh.

Though the commissariat question has proved a continual source of difficulty to the military authorities, it has been satisfactorily solved, and the Indians, from the standpoint of food, have fared well. On this campaign they made the acquaintance of ration jam, which they like immensely. The Gurkhas will not touch marmalade, although they are as fond of jam as the rest of the Indians are. They are very keen on their cigarette rations. The army supplies the Indian troops with *ghi*, or clarified butter, which they use extensively in cooking, and with Indian corn, from which they bake their *chupatties*, thin wafer-like cakes cooked in the ashes of the camp-fire.

You can imagine what an epoch-making adventure it was to these thousands of Indians, living their carefully ordered lives in one of the oldest civilizations of the world, to be suddenly transplanted into the civilization of the white man. For the first time they have seen the white man served by his own race. For the first time they have seen the white man pursuing those agricultural avocations which, in agricultural India, are carried on exclusively by the native.

For the first time they have seen the white man at close quarters in his home.

Agriculturist as every Indian is, it is the life of the French peasant that has primarily absorbed his interest in things outside the war. The prodigious size of the cows, in comparsion with the small Indian kine, overwhelms him with admiration; so also the heavy Flemish horses. He is amazed to find himself surrounded on all sides by *pukka* houses—that is to say, houses with tiled roofs and timber flooring and lath-and-plaster walls and glazed windows—to see that even the lowliest French peasant can aspire to dwellings like these.

A very familiar sight in Flanders is the dog-wheel, a large open tread-wheel, affixed to the side of the house, and driven by a dog, for the pumping of water. This spectacle is of never-failing interest to the Indians. It is frequently described at length in their letters home, and it is the theme of endless conversation amongst themselves. A group of Sikh troopers one day was heard gravely discussing whether the dog worked the wheel from promptings of natural sagacity —from a canine desire, as it were, to help with the housework—or whether he was a poor slave imprisoned in the wheel and sternly ordered to do his master's bidding.

The exceptional beauty of the Flanders spring, succeeding to the cold and damp of winter, caused many men to express their determination to return to France after the war, and settle down as agriculturalists. I believe the men seldom, if ever, write to their womenfolk. The brother of the writer is

generally the recipient of the letters from the front. Often, if there is any mention of the writer's wife, she is referred to allegorically, as a tree in a certain field, and so on. Many letters request that the writer's sister may be told to pray at some specific shrine for the safe return of her brother. Some of these letters are fine recruiting agents, describing in glowing terms the advantages of being able to save one's pay, of the good food, and the interesting life.

As these Indian soldiers' letters are written and addressed in the native character, sorting and distribution has to be done by a special staff of native clerks from the Indian postal service, while Indian Army officers, conversant with the different languages and scripts, attend to the censoring. Certain vernacular journals are permitted to be sent to the troops, but the men, for the most part, eagerly read a special news-sheet, issued every two or three days from the Indian Corps Headquarters. This journal, edited by a distinguished Indian Intelligence Officer, is reproduced by a manifolding process in Hindi (which is familiar to the Gurkhas, Garhwalis, and Dogras), Gurmukhi (the language of the Sikhs), and Hindustani (for the other Indian troops). It gives a summary of the latest war news, starting with the most recent events on the British and French fronts, in plain and simple language. Here is a specimen:

"INDIAN SUMMARY OF NEWS, 26TH TO 28TH JULY, 1915.

"This great war has now lasted exactly a year. It is announced officially that the total British

casualties up to date amount to 330,995 men, of whom 69,313 have been killed. This includes all theatres of war—France, the Dardanelles, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Africa—as well as the losses of our fleet over the whole world. It may seem a high figure, but it must be remembered that the German casualties are at least 30 lakhs by this time, of whom about 8 lakhs must have been killed. The Turks have also lost very heavily. Our total of less than 70,000 killed is, therefore, comparatively small: most of them are, of course, British, but they also include Canadians, Australians, Indians, New Zealanders and African troops."

Thus, it will be seen that there is no attempt to hide unpleasant news from the Indian troops, but that, on the contrary, the endeavour is to explain events to them in an intelligible fashion.

These news-sheets are printed by the thousand, and are distributed not only among the troops at the front, but are also sent to the Indian troops at the bases and in the hospitals in France and in England. A special copy of each number is forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief in India.

The relations between the Indians and the French civilian population are extremely friendly. The French peasants in these parts have a saying that British troops give the most trouble in billets, the French are less exacting, while the Indians cause the least inconvenience of all. Their wants are few, their demands modest—water, a place where they may build their fires and range their pots, a roof beneath which they may sleep, a little straw for a bed.

They are infinitely obliging. They share their food with their hosts, and play with their children. I have seldom seen a prettier sight than a glimpse I had one day of some Sikhs belonging to a squadron quartered in a school, romping with the children in the playground. Experience has shown that the Indians pick up French far more quickly than the average British soldier. I have been amused to come upon a row of native soldiers sitting on a bench in the sunshine outside an *estaminet*, engaged in a dignified exchange of ideas with the peasants.

The friendly relations existing between the Indians and the French are best seen at the gymkhanas which the Indian cavalry give from time to time. A broad field is chosen, a course is staked off, and in this space the cavalry disport themselves for two or three hours on a Sunday afternoon, with races, tent-pegging, trick-riding, and sports of all kinds, to the enormous delight of the peasantry. Posters placarded in the neighbouring villages a day or two before bring all the villagers flocking to the scene on foot, on cycles, in old-fashioned hooded carts, drawn by such sorry specimens of horse-flesh as the French Army has discarded.

I went to a *Tamasha*, as the Indian troops call these affairs, one fine Sunday afternoon in May. A broad plateau in the middle of the fields had been selected for the sports, and when I arrived an enormous crowd, as picturesque as any I have ever seen, was thronging round the ropes. There were old peasants in the local costume of black smocks and peaked caps, *curés* in shovel-hats and *soutanes*,

French troops in a bewildering variety of uniforms—pale blue Hussars, *Chasseurs d'Afrique* in flowing red cloaks, Moroccan *Goumiers* in swelling white burnouses, Zouaves in red and blue monkey-jackets; French interpreters in khaki, with the golden palm-leaf tabs and khaki-covered *képis;* Indian *sowars* (native troopers) with tall puggarees and long smock tunics with chain shoulder-straps and round silver buttons, Gurkhas with their slouch hats, Indian Army officers with unfamiliar collar badges on their biscuit-coloured khaki uniforms.

It was a fine *Tamasha.* There was marvellously skilful tent-pegging, with a rush of horses, a thunder of hoofs, clouds of dust, and that exhilarating swoop upwards of the lance with peg neatly transpierced as the rider whirls past. There was a most exciting Victoria Cross race with drums beating, pistols going off, much shouting and beating of hands—one race for the Indian troops and another for the British troops brigaded with them. I was quite touched to hear the uproarious and whole-hearted applause wherewith the British soldiers greeted the winner of the Indians' race. There was a foot-race for the village children, to the huge delight of the Indians, who ran along the course encouraging the youngsters and setting those who fell on their feet again.

But the display of trick-riding was the *clou* of the show, and elicited in particular the outspoken admiration of the French cavalry officers—who know something about riding. Handkerchiefs were laid in a row on the ground. Presently, in a swirl of

Alfieri phot

INDIAN CAVALRY IN A FRENCH VILLAGE. NOTE BANDOLIERS ROUND HORSES' NECKS.

blinding dust four horsemen came thundering along, and, as they reached the handkerchiefs, each man flung himself, head downwards, backwards from the saddle, and snatched, or sought to snatch, his appointed cloth, then raised himself in the saddle again.

There were men who rode the length of the course head downwards, others who rode with their faces to the horse's tail, fired revolvers at the men riding behind them, whereupon the men fell, ostensibly dead, from the saddle, and were dragged along, head downwards, their heads almost touching the ground.

What amused me about the show was to see that the performers were every whit as interested and excited in the performance as the crowd. Every horseman was on his mettle to show off his horse and his horsemanship. Some of the riders indulged in touches of superb swagger. When at the end of the trick-riding the horsemen stopped dead in the middle of a rush, and, suddenly wheeling their horses, brought up short at the saluting-point to the note of a bugle, those stalwart figures, swelling with pride, sitting their panting, foam-flecked horses, presented as magnificent a spectacle as I have seen in this war.

By the time these pages will have seen the light the Indian Corps will have been a year at the front. In September last the first of them landed at Marseilles, a bizarre procession that might have passed out of the pages of The Thousand and One Nights, swarthy faces and bristling moustachios and glittering eyes beneath proud turbans, strange knives and implements, odd-looking carts, mules, goats.

There was a spell of wild and delirious enthusiasm among the *Marseillais*, most imaginative of French populations . . . and the Indians passed on.

I saw them later at Orléans, some of the cavalry and part of the Lahore Division. The principal hotel was full of Indian Army officers. They all seem to have a certain modesty of mien, a blend of reserve and simplicity, that marks them down, apart from the Indian drill uniform and the little forage-caps that so many of them wear.

The city swarmed with Indians. Their little mule-carts, in charge of dark-skinned *mehtars*, or sweepers, heads muffled up in all manner of cloths to keep out the first touch of autumnal damp, stood outside shops, surrounded by gaping crowds. To and fro in the streets native orderlies passed with their curious straight stride, their impassive faces, scarcely seeming to note the air of profound curiosity wherewith the good people of Orléans followed them.

Here a Pathan *sowar* in khaki puggaree held a pair of stamping horses outside an office ; there a fatigue-party of Gurkhas with pronounced Mongolian cast of features, slouch hats and *kukri* slung at the back of the belt, came marching solidly over the cobble-stones, and swung their heads smartly over at the command of their havildar in his curious clipped English: "Eyes . . . rait!" as a Brigade Major went by resplendent in new "brass hat" and red tabs.

The barber's shop in the principal street was crowded with healthy, dusty young men, back from long drills at the camp outside the town, clamouring for hair-cuts and shaves, and buying hair-oils and

soap and razor blades with a reckless extravagance that made the proprietor pinch himself to make sure he was not dreaming.

The front! That was the phrase that had a magic ring for them all. At the camp the officers talked of nothing else. They showed me their Sikhs and their Pathans and their Gurkhas as who should say: "When the Empire gets *these*, victory is assured!" They had chafed in India, when the Empire went to war, lest their services might not be called upon. One gallant soul grieved so much, as we have read, that he deserted and enlisted in the ranks of a British Regular regiment and died at the front.

The call came. I left them at Orléans, untried in European warfare, eager, impatient. When I saw them again six months later they were veterans of war.

The despatch of the Indian Corps to take part in the war in Europe was an experiment. That the experiment was possible, that the Indian troops have shown themselves to be loyal and well-behaved while fighting our battles on foreign soil, that India has falsified the hopes of the enemy and the fears of the pessimists as to her fealty to the Empire in the event of a European war, seems to me to be the finest tribute to the wisdom and justice of our administration of India. The loyalty which our rule has fostered has withstood all attempts to corrupt it. The attempts of the Germans on the Western front to sow sedition among our Indian troops have failed as lamentably as the more redoubtable activity of their secret agents in India would appear to have done.

At one time the Germans were wont to bombard the Indians holding the trenches in France with proclamations from the air. These manifestos, generally couched in incorrect Hindi or Pushtu, the work of painstaking *Herren Professoren* at German Oriental Seminaries, announced the German victories and the proclamation of the "holy war" by the Khalifate against the Allies, and painted a rosy picture of the delights awaiting the Indians who would desert to the enemy. The Indian, who has a keen sense of humour, laughed at the bombast of these preposterous concoctions, and made fun of the grammatical mistakes.

Two German airmen who were brought down in the lines of the Indians one day were found to have a large stock of these manifestos in their machine with them. The prisoners turned livid when the discovery was made, for, under military law, I believe, it rendered them liable to be shot. With perfect *sang-froid*, however, our officers distributed the pamphlets to the Indians who were present at the capture, and the two airmen had the mortification of seeing the broad grins of the sepoys as they read out, amid shouts of laughter, the grammatical mistakes in the work of the German Orientalists. This air propaganda was so barren of results that the Germans eventually abandoned it.

The spirit of the Indian troops is splendid and soldierly. Above all, they value recompense for valour. The V.C., of course, is their highest ambition. They attach more importance to "Izzat"—their prestige—than to anything else in life. The

bitterest blow that an Indian in the field can receive is to be passed over for promotion. I heard of a non-commissioned officer who had distinguished himself by a brilliant feat of gallantry, and was informed that the "General Sahib" proposed to reward him by a present of money. The havildar in question had already been recommended for decoration. "It is very kind of the *General Sahib*," the man said, "to have thought of making me a present, but I would rather have the decoration."

Men of ancient fighting races, they esteem courage highly and count cowardice a disgrace. Praise of their gallant deeds is as music in their ears. Never are they so proud as when the *General Sahib*, Sir James Willcocks, commanding the Indian Corps, inspects them after a fight, and tells them in their own tongue, in plain martial language that they understand, that he is satisfied with them, that they have fought well.

Their attitude towards the Germans is curious. They respect the enemy's technical efficiency in war, but they do not believe that he is any match for the bayonet or the *kukri* when it comes to in-fighting. "It is well!" said the Garhwalis, as they came out of some swift slaying at Neuve Chapelle. "We have killed many Germans! They are good fighters!"

Kwaja Mohammed Khan, Sirdar Bahadur, one of the Indian *aides-de-camp* to Sir James Willcocks, a magnificent figure of a man from the borders of Buner, in his uniform of Rissaldar of the Guides, with a hawk-like nose and fierce black eyes, said to me one day: "The Indians stand the weather

well. Why shouldn't they? If the Germans stand it, so can we! Huh!"

They are fierce and terrible in the charge, the Indians. But they are merciful to their prisoners. Among the Indians there has been none of that slaying of prisoners that has eternally besmirched the German escutcheon. The Indians bring their prisoners in proudly—living booty, proud testimony to the prowess of their captors.

I met some of the Westphalians we captured at Neuve Chapelle on their way down to the base to be shipped to England—fine, well-set-up, front-line troops they were, too. I well remember the eagerness with which they explained to me that resistance had been impossible. "*Auf einmal*," they said in their clipped Westphalian speech, "*sahen wir uns von den Schwarzen umzingelt. Da müssten wir uns ergeben!*"

And they sighed heavily.

The first Indians to receive their baptism of fire in this war were the 57th Rifles and the 129th Baluchis of the Lahore Division, which came up to the front minus one brigade left behind in Egypt. These two battalions were sent into action at Hollebeke about October 22 in the initial stages of the first battle of Ypres, and acquitted themselves very well. In the meantime the rest of the two brigades of which the Lahore Division was composed were assisting the Second Corps southward, where the fighting was desperate and bloody.

On October 27 the Germans captured Neuve Chapelle, and to the 47th Sikhs, the 9th Bhopals, and the 20th and 21st Companies of Sappers and Miners, was

allotted the task of retaking the village. The 47th Sikhs, and the two Sappers and Miners' companies, were specially mentioned in despatches for their fine work here. Captain Nosworthy, of the Sappers, leading a forlorn hope of a dozen Indians, managed to get into the village at the price of no less than seven wounds, but we failed to regain possession of the place, which remained in German hands until March.

The arrival of the Meerut Division at the end of the month practically completed the Indian Corps, which was placed under the command of Sir James Willcocks. Against it some 60,000 to 70,000 Germans were arrayed—the whole of the crack VIIth Corps from Münster, tough Westphalian fighters, part of the XIVth Corps, and part of the 48th Reserve Division. Sir James Willcocks was told that he must hold out at all costs, and that no reinforcements could be promised him.

On November 2 the Germans managed to pierce our lines west of Neuve Chapelle, where the 2nd Gurkhas held the trenches. A fine charge, led by Colonel Norie, their battalion commander, prevented the situation from becoming serious, and all that the Germans achieved was that our line was slightly bent back.

For several months to come Rouges Bancs to Givenchy was to be the Indians' line. Autumn crept by with drenching rain, and then, on November 4, a spell of hard frost set in and lasted until the 25th. On November 23 the 112th Regiment of the XIVth German Corps managed to sap its way close up to the trenches held by the 34th Sikh Pioneers and the 9th

Bhopals. A determined attack put the enemy in possession of these trenches over a front of several hundred yards. That evening, however, a series of counter-attacks on our part drove the Germans back with great slaughter. The 39th Garhwalis, stout little hillmen resembling the Gurkhas in features, but of rather heavier build, played a very fine part, and one of their number, Darwan Singh Negi, won the Victoria Cross.

On November 25 the weather broke. The frost vanished and gave place to torrential rain. For three weeks it rained almost incessantly. The trenches soon became rivers of water, with two or three feet of mud at the bottom. In some places the men stood waist-deep in filth. Not alone the Indians were exposed to these trying climatic conditions. The British Regulars brigaded with them had to face the same ordeal, but the Indian, peculiarly sensible to damp cold, undoubtedly suffered more severely.

Frost-bite and chills and very long spells in the front line—some battalions were from twenty-one to twenty-five days on end in the trenches—increased the difficulties of the Indian troops. In mid December the success of General Maud'huy's forces on our right in capturing the village of Vermelles created a favourable opportunity for an offensive on our part. By this time the Sirhind Brigade, the brigade which the Lahore Division had left behind in Egypt, had arrived.

On December 19 the Lahore Division started the attack with the Highland Light Infantry and the 4th Gurkha Rifles. On the left, battalions of the

Underwood & Underwood phot

INDIAN INFANTRY ON THE MARCH.

Meerut Division assaulted. Some trenches were won, but could not be held, and our troops fell back before counter-attacks.

On the following day the Germans started a general offensive. Opposite Festubert they blew up ten mines under the trenches of the Highland Light Infantry and the 4th Gurkhas, and, supported by a heavy bombardment with high-explosive shells and *minenwerfer* bombs, attacked. The Sirhind Brigade was driven back and the Germans captured Givenchy, but the Manchesters and Suffolks, attacking with splendid heroism, retook the village. They failed, however, to make further progress. A counter-attack, delivered from the direction of the Rue de Marais by the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade with the 47th Sikhs and 8th Gurkhas, was likewise unable to get on. To the north the Meerut Division was in difficulties owing to the German wedge at Givenchy, and the retreat of a battalion of the 2nd Gurkhas at a place known as the Orchard dangerously threatened our position. The arrival of a brigade of the 1st Division, and, finally, of the whole Division, enabled the Indian Corps to be withdrawn at Christmas for a much-needed rest.

In his despatch on the winter fighting in Flanders (dated General Headquarters, February 2, 1915) the Commander-in-Chief said:

"The Indian troops have fought with the utmost steadiness and gallantry whenever they have been called upon. . . . It was some three weeks after the events recorded in paragraph 4 (the fighting at Givenchy) that I made my inspection of the Indian

Corps, under Sir James Willcocks. The appearance they presented was most satisfactory, and fully confirmed my first opinion that the Indian troops only required rest, and a little acclimatizing, to bring out all their fine inherent fighting qualities."

Events were to justify this tribute of the *Junghi Lat Sahib*, as the Indians call the Commander-in-Chief, to his Indian troops. At Neuve Chapelle, in March, the Indians—and in first line the 1st and 2nd 39th Garhwalis and the 3rd Gurkhas—showed what they could do when it came to fighting in the open.

The Indian Corps was on the right of our line, the Meerut Division in front, the Lahore Division in support. The Garhwalis went away clear through the village, and the Gurkhas, outdistancing everybody, actually penetrated into the Bois de Biez, whence the Germans were eventually able to check our further progress. All the Indians engaged displayed splendid qualities of dash and steadiness, and after Neuve Chapelle it may be said that the Indians were at the height of their military efficiency.

You will remember that, during the second battle of Ypres, the Lahore Division was sent up to the Pilckem road to operate in support of the French, who were counter-attacking to win back the ground they had given before the first German gas attack. The Indians fought magnificently, and the 40th Pathans, under the leadership of the gallant Lieutenant-Colonel Rennick, who gave his life that day, showed splendid courage in face of a terrible ordeal.

The Indian Corps has rendered a great, an inestimable service to the British cause. The first contingent came into the field at a moment when every man was wanted, and as its numbers were completed, it took over its share of our line and held it efficiently. Everything in trench warfare was new to the Indians, and for months they had no opportunity of displaying those qualities of dash that won them fame in many a hard fight in their own land. But they showed themselves to be excellent marksmen, and on patrol work revealed a cool pluck and resourcefulness which brought in much valuable information.

The Indians have proved themselves to be a smart and soldierly body of men, clean and well-mannered, and, like all good troops, most punctilious about saluting. Their cavalry, which prays day and night for a chance to get at the enemy with the lance, is a dream of beauty on parade, with men and horses in the very pink of condition. Both for the Indians themselves and for the Empire, the sending of the Indian Corps to Europe was a great adventure, in many respects the most remarkable event of the world war. The future lies on the knees of the gods, but to those, like the writer, who have seen the British and Indian troops side by side in the field, one thing at least is clear, and that is, that this campaign has knit even closer than before the ties of affection and respect existing between the Indian soldier and his British leaders.

CHAPTER XV

T.F.

"The conduct and bearing of these units under fire, and the efficient manner in which they carried out the various duties assigned to them, have imbued me with the highest hope as to the value and help of Territorial troops generally."—Field-Marshal Sir John French.

The first Territorial troops that I saw in the field was the North Midland Division. Neither they nor I will probably ever forget that meeting, not because either of us made an unforgettable impression on the other, but by reason of the circumstances in which it occurred. It was a wet and cheerless March afternoon, the hour when the greyness of weeping spring is succumbing to the shades of evening. The Division, fresh out from England, had just arrived at its first billets in the field in and about the little village of Merris, which lies a little off the beaten track between Hazebrouck and Bailleul.

A battalion—from the Midlands—was halted in the village, a dirty little jumble of white houses straggling along a single main street with a few feet of sidewalk, a cobbled roadway, a totally undistinguished church, a weather-stained and sordid-looking *Mairie*. The rain blew hither and thither in cold, soaking gusts, and pavements and roadways were slippery with sticky, yellow mud.

The men of the battalion had been allowed to break the ranks. They overflowed in that squalid village street. They had evidently come a long way, for most of them were soaked to the skin, and their boots and puttees were all smeared with clay. They stood about in groups in the desultory fashion of the Briton in a strange place, or pressed together outside the village shops and stared through the tiny windows at the heterogeneous jumble of articles within—loaves of bread, tins of sardines, bootlaces, pats of butter, picture-postcards, and, as a reminder that British troops had passed that way before, boxes and packets of English cigarettes.

It did not need the bronze "T" on collars and shoulder-straps to tell me that these were not Regular troops. These men were prone to silence, rather shy, a trifle helpless, as they stood about the rain-swept street, waiting for their officers to show them their billets, to tell them what to do. They seemed to be drinking in their impressions of this, their first experience of life in the field, and I doubt that they will ever fade from the minds of those men, so cheerless was their welcome at Merris. Regulars would have made themselves at home on the instant. They would have found a fire at which they might have dried their sodden overcoats and brewed themselves a drink of hot tea in their capacious pannikins. If fire or warm drinks were not forthcoming, they would have ferreted out for themselves a dry corner under a roof somewhere, and gone to sleep with that infinite capacity for sleeping at odd moments and in queer places that is peculiar to the British soldier.

The officers did not seem to me to be quite sure of themselves. They had a certain earnestness of mien, a certain formality of manner, and seemed inclined to hold aloof from their men. It is only the fire-trench, after all, that teaches the new officer the exact proportion of familiarity that discipline permits between officers and men.

Their equipment, too, seemed rather more elaborate than was consonant with comfort on a long march through the wet. Their caps were stiff-crowned, they wore heavy overcoats, and over them their web equipment hung, attached to it a more or less large variety of the leather-bound articles that people at home present to the departing warrior, most of which he discards after a week or two in the trenches, and their puttees were quite impeccably tied. To me, who had grown accustomed to the *négligé* of dress and manner of the fire-trench, these small distinctions were probably more apparent than they would have been to an ordinary observer.

It was not until months later that I saw the North Midland Division again. It was a thundery summer day in the trenches, with bursts of hot sunshine alternating with drenching showers. The trenches were ankle-deep in mud and water, and had been dug in many places through the all too shallow burial-places of the dead of former fights. In some places the British and German lines were very close together, and there was short shrift for him who should thrust his head, even for a moment, above the shelter of the parapet.

In these unwholesome surroundings I found my

Territorials of Merris again. But in the sunburnt, calmly deliberate veterans who manned the parapet I scarcely recognized the young troops with the half-fledged air that I had seen standing in the rain on that March afternoon. The conditions in those trenches on that showery morning were, I imagine, incomparably worse than anything the Division had undergone before. But the men made the best of things, and, woebegone and weather-stained though they were in appearance, went about their normal round of duties as though they had been living all their lives in mud and water and in close proximity to a dangerous foe.

Over fires skilfully contrived in dry corners some were cooking pannikins of savoury soup and steaming tea; others, who had been on guard all night, slept as peacefully as children, though "whizz-bangs" burst noisily to and fro about the parapet, and now and again the thunder rolled imperiously above the sound of the guns. The rain came down steadily; every trench was a slough of sticky, yellow clay and foul water; the walls of dug-out and "funk-hole" reeked with damp. But the sleepers slept on, those who could not find room in a "funk-hole" lying on the "fire-stand," completely enveloped in their great-coats or waterproof sheets.

Active service had transformed the officers. They looked as hard and as capable and as self-reliant as their men. They had lost much of their formality of manner; that very scrupulous correctitude of dress had gone; vanished, too, were many of the natty little articles that, but a few months since, had jingled

melodiously about them as they marched up from the coast at the head of their platoon or company. Such of them as wore caps had old soft caps, stained with mud and sweat, crushed well on to their heads; many were tunicless, and made their round of the trenches simply attired in grey soldier shirt and old riding-breeches thrust into trench boots, for all the world like the old-time "Forty-niners" of the gold-fields.

The link between them and their men was much looser, but much more intimate. It was not difficult to see that the men leant more than ever on their officers, and that the officers, on their side, were beginning to "discover" their men—to discover the soul of the Englishman, as it has never been unbared between Englishmen before, I think—simple, brave, devoted, uncomplaining, inspired by an ocean-deep patriotism not fed from external sources, but springing spontaneous and elemental from within. Both had found themselves and one another, officers and men.

It was in the rainy days of the first battle of Ypres that our Territorials first found themselves actually fighting on foreign soil. Of Yeomanry Cavalry, the Northumberland, the Northamptonshire, the North Somerset and the Leicestershire Regiments, and the Oxfordshire Hussars; of Territorial Infantry, the London Scottish, the Honourable Artillery Company, the Queen's Westminsters, and the Hertfordshire, were engaged. General Sir Julian Byng, commanding the cavalry, made special mention to the Commander-in-Chief of the conduct of the

Yeomanry in the field, while, in the case of the Territorial Infantry, Sir Douglas Haig spoke in high terms of their gallant behaviour.

On these powerful recommendations Sir John French wrote the sentence in his despatch on the first battle of Ypres which I have quoted at the head of this chapter. It must have been with feelings of peculiar satisfaction that he found himself in a position to pay this well-merited tribute to the Territorials. For he, more than any other, was responsible for the creation of the Territorial Army which was destined to play an invaluable part in the expansion of the Expeditionary Force into the great national army. It was he whom Lord Haldane, fresh to the War Office, summoned to bring his wide experience, his flexible mind, his great knowledge of war, to the task of carrying the Haldane reforms—first and foremost among them the creation of the Territorial Force—to fruitful accomplishment.

The material of the Territorials sent out to the front was always good; often their training and equipment left something to be desired. At the outset of the war the progress of the Territorials from England to the firing-line was very gentle. The first Territorial battalions to come out were given a preliminary stage at a temporary camp established at General Headquarters, where they went through a further course of instruction at the hands of men fresh from the trenches, or, at any rate, in closest touch with the army in the field, and where any shortcomings in their equipment were rectified. As their training proceeded they were sent to the

trenches in driblets, the officers going by couples to serve for some time with a battalion in the front line, the men going first by sections, then by platoons, then by double companies, until it was judged that the whole battalion was sufficiently experienced to take over by itself a section of the trenches, preferably in one of the quieter parts of the line.

The famous Artists' Rifles have played a unique rôle in this war. The battalion was originally intended to take its place in the line the same as the Regulars and the other Territorial troops out here. But their fine *esprit de corps*, together with the high standard of intelligence and the good social standing of their men, pointed to this distinguished battalion as an ideal Officers' Training Corps in the field. The experiment was tried. The battalion, as a homogeneous unit, was not sent to the front line, but retained in the rear, and used for furnishing sentries and doing other duties, while likely candidates were selected from the ranks and sent to a Cadet School to be trained for commissions. At the Cadet School, which, from very modest beginnings, has now developed into a large and flourishing institution—a veritable Sandhurst in Flanders—they are given a thoroughly practical course of instruction, which includes trench modelling in clay and weekly visits of forty-eight hours' duration to the trenches. So successful has the experiment proved that the Commander-in-Chief is said to have stated that the Artists' Rifles have been worth a Division to him. Altogether the Artists have supplied more than a

thousand officers to the army in the field—a truly magnificent achievement.

When the Territorials first came to France, a Regular might yet safely ruffle his nose at them and get a laugh. "T.F." stood for Saturday afternoon soldiering and tubby Colonels and bespectacled privates. But the Territorials were used to being made fun of. In peace-time kicks and no ha'pence were their lot, and in war they did not care very much whether they got either as long as they might "have a smack at the Germans." So they grinned and bore the chaff, and settled down in uncomfortable billets in dreary towns and dirty villages to learn what they had not learnt about war—and at first it was a good deal—in their camps at home, chafing desperately at the waiting, but doing all manner of useful jobs behind the line against the time that their services might be required for the work they had volunteered to do.

Their chance came at last, as it comes to every man in the field. At a critical stage in the first battle of Ypres (if you can speak of a critical stage in a battle that was one long crisis), the Territorials I have already mentioned, horse and foot, went into action and bore themselves well. The London Scottish, particularly, fought like veterans at Messines, though I fear that the injudicious "booming" of their spirited charge in the newspapers called down on their heads a good deal of unmerited ill-will on the part of other battalions out here.

Winter came and went. In March the first Territorial Division arrived in France. Others followed, and Territorial Divisions began to be employed, with

due circumspection, as homogeneous units to do their share of holding our lengthening line. Even as the Territorial Divisions began to arrive, individual battalions were undergoing their baptism of fire on the bloody field of Neuve Chapelle. There were many Territorials in that hard-fought fight, and none did better than the 6th Gordons and the 3rd London Regiment, the latter executing a splendid charge that so electrified the Regulars who witnessed it, that they stood up on the parapet of their trenches and cheered as the " Terriers " swung past.

The second battle of Ypres saw the début of a Territorial Division, fighting as a homogeneous unit, in the shape of the Northumberland Division, which, as I have described elsewhere in this book, though only a few days out from England, went straight into action and played its part unflinchingly. Indeed, the fight for the Ypres Salient was a Territorials' as it was a Regulars' battle from the inferno of Hill 60, where the Queen Victoria Rifles—" the Q. Vics," as they are affectionately called in the Brigade—and the 6th King's Liverpool Regiment earned the unstinted admiration of their fellow-Regulars, to the horror of the closing stages of the battle on May 13, when the North Somerset, the Leicestershire and the Essex Yeomanry showed the Lifeguards and the Blues and the Bays, the flower of our cavalry, that Yeomanry also know how to die.

Right round the arc of the salient, throughout those weeks of bloody fighting, Territorials fought side by side with the Regulars. After the battle General Prowse, commanding the Brigade to which

the London Rifle Brigade, that fine London Territorial Regiment, was attached, said to me: "*If you see the L.R.B.'s, tell them from me we want them back. We all look on them as Regulars now.*"

The old Territorial joke died at Ypres. It lies buried in the salient in the graves where Territorials from nearly every shire in the United Kingdom are sleeping their last sleep. Our fathers who laughed at *Punch's* gibes at the old Volunteers, with their "sham-fights" and "field-days" on Wimbledon Common, little thought that those rotund Colonels and bewhiskered Majors and slow-moving privates were creating the tradition that was to bear our gallant Territorials with heads uplifted unflinchingly through the inferno of the Flanders plain.

Do you remember Saturday afternoons in London before the war? and the processions of young fellows in odd-looking uniforms of grey and blue and bottle-green, rifles slung across their shoulders, hastening to the railway-stations for their afternoon drills? Some of us scoffed, maybe, at the "earnest" young men whose pleasure it was to "play at soldiers" . . . but the shame of it came back to me in a hot flush as I stood by their graves in the salient of Ypres.

The attack on the Fromelles ridge on May 9, the fighting at Festubert in May and June, the capture, loss, and recapture of the trenches at Hooge in June, July, and August, found the Territorials in action every time. Their behaviour under fire only confirmed the good impression which their début at Ypres in November had produced on the army. Its verdict was, "The 'Terriers' are all right."

Thus, the Regular came to admire—nay, to love the Territorial. He admitted him into the inner circle of his esteem and affection, where hitherto only the navy and the Royal Flying Corps, of our combatants in this war, have had a place. If the New Army prove themselves hardy fighters, imbued with those soldierly qualities which are the sole criterion by which the army in the field judges men, then they, too, shall find ingress into that jealously guarded preserve, the heart of the Regular.

When he gives you his friendship, the British soldier is a good friend. Between some Regular and Territorial battalions bonds of the closest affection have been formed in the field. Thus, the gallant Hertfordshire Territorials, who wear the Hart badge of the Bedfordshire Regiment, are sworn brothers to the Guards, by reason of their being brigaded with the Guards in the famous Guards Brigade—the only non-Guards battalion in the Brigade—for many months. The army calls them "The Herts Guards," and right proud the Hertfordshires are of the title.

War has rounded off many edges in the Territorials, yet, to the inexperienced eye, there is still a marked difference between the Regular and even the most seasoned Territorial. A Territorial battalion is far more of a family gathering than a Regular battalion. Your Territorial regiment recruits, as a rule, from one more or less restricted area, so that there are all kinds of bonds of family, business, and speech between its men. To the Regulars of our old standing army war has ever been a business: to the Territorial it is much more of a prolonged foreign holiday—"the

most glorious change of air and scene I have ever had," is how a member of the H.A.C. referred to his service at the front.

This homogeneity of interests in a Territorial battalion also applies to trades. Thus, you will find, in the case of Territorials from the North, whole battalions of miners, of cotton operatives, of gillies. I heard of an entire company of a certain Territorial regiment formed out of hands from a well-known brewery, who had joined *en masse*.

I imagine that our Territorial regiments resemble more closely than any other formations we have in the field to-day the bands of archers who, in the Middle Ages, as Froissart tells, followed their feudal Barons to France and fought over the very fields where the war is being waged to-day. Like our Territorials, these bands must have been united within themselves by countless home associations, led, as they were, by their home leaders, speaking their home speech, swearing by their home shrines. The tie that welds Regulars together is the spirit of the regiment; home is the uniting bond of the Territorials.

The Regular generally marches in silence. If he sings it is as often as not one of those soldier songs of obscure origin like "The Song of Shame," which I have often heard sung but have never seen in print. It deals with the misfortunes of a lass that loved not wisely, but too well, and beginning,

"She wuz pore but she wuz honest,"

continues through any number of more or less unprintable strophes.

The Territorial, on the other hand, hates to march in silence. If he is not singing, he is whistling. His range of songs is extensive. He will sing anything, from doggerel set to hymn tunes to Grand Opera. He will carol from Poperinghe to Ypres, from Lillers to Béthune, that familiar marching ditty which goes to the tune of "Here we go gathering nuts and may":

"Nobody knows how dry we are,
Nobody knows how dry we are,
Nobody knows how dry we are,
And nobody seems to care-oh!"

and when one song stops, another is started.

I have no hesitation in setting down the fine qualities of pluck and endurance which the Territorials have displayed in this war to the educational influence of games. The best type of Territorial—the young city-dweller, the shop-assistant and clerk class—is nearly always an athlete, and I make no doubt that the healthy spirit of the cricket, football and hockey field, and of the boxing-ring, is responsible not only for his fine capacity for delivering blows, but also for standing knocks without repining, without losing his temper. Our games are the product of our English minds, no doubt, and you find these same qualities in the Regular soldier. But in the latter this little seed is cultivated and developed by the force of regimental tradition, while in the Territorial, who comes out to the front practically as an outsider to the army, it is by the physical and mental training he has received from the games he has played in times of peace.

Months of active service do not seem to eradicate

altogether a certain aloofness which generally exists between the Regular and the Territorial, save in the case of those units which have been brought into close touch in the field. The officers seem to slip more slowly into the groove than the men. The Territorial officer is new to the game. Under our Territorial system he has had but scant opportunities in times of peace of knowing his men, and little or no chance of familiarizing himself with the spirit of the army. Until he has found his feet, therefore, he is inclined to grapple himself desperately to the regulations, thereby acquiring, not only towards his men, but also towards his brother officers in the Regulars, a certain formality of manner which those brought up in that perfect school of easy manners, the British Army, are inclined to resent.

When I have been in trenches held by Territorials, I have sometimes noticed that the officers have been more concerned with the making of reports, etc., than more practical and immediate cares, such as the comfort of their men, the cleanliness of their trench (of great importance from the standpoint of hygiene), and the movements of the enemy. A good regimental officer of Regulars, in similar circumstances, would have let the paper business go hang, and would have set the whole company hustling, baling out the water in the trenches, improving the dug-outs and mending the flooring, whilst he himself would have had a prowl round looking out for German snipers and for any likely corners from which his men might " draw a bead " on the enemy.

The Territorial officer is lacking in experience,

but that is a fault that remedies itself with every day that he spends in the front line. It is here that a good Staff tells. An active Brigadier who constantly visits the trenches can get the very best results out of the real good-will of the Territorial officer.

I have been round the trenches once or twice with the Brigade Major of one of the brigades of a Territorial Division, and I have been astonished to see the number of small points which his quick and experienced eye has detected, which he has pointed out, always in a tactful, suggesting way, to the officers in charge of the front-line companies—here a German loophole left open, offering a chance for a good shot (in which these Territorial battalions abound); there a line of fresh earth behind the German trench, suggesting underground activity of some sort; there, again, a weak parapet in our fire-trench, or a man whom the careful eye has seen exposing himself recklessly. The Brigade Major, who had fought at Mons, had experience: the Territorial officers were getting it. The courteous, eager way in which they accepted his hints was as charming as the suave fashion in which they were proffered.

The army in the field has not been slow to learn that a profusion of talent in the arts and crafts is lying dormant in the Territorial battalions. If an expert in any branch is wanted, application is always made to the nearest Territorial battalion, seldom, if ever, without success. A friend of mine, a company commander in the Ypres region, having procured a piano for his company's rest billets behind

the line, found the instrument so much out of tune as to be useless. Forthwith word was sent round for a piano-tuner. A search through the battalion drew a blank. A note to an adjacent Territorial regiment produced a finished piano-tuner who had been driving a lorry in the Mechanical Transport. Naturally, he had none of his piano-tuning tools with him, but he made excellent shift with a couple of spanners from the travelling workshop. In the same way a Brigade wanted a plumber and a clerk, and got both from its Territorial battalion. The clerk was a bookmaker's clerk, it is true, but he proved himself a treasure—" . . . Besides," as the Staff Captain said, " if one ever wants to make a book on a race at home, why, there he is, don't you know!"

Territorial battalions have supplied the army with chemists and doctors and fly experts, with map-drawers and photographers and electricians, and with an extraordinary variety of dramatic and musical talent for concerts at the front. At the fortnightly " smokers " of the Machine Gun School, which are by far the best in the field, Territorial battalions supply a good proportion of the contributors to the programme. The Artists' Rifles are particularly prolific in platform talent. They possess three much sought after performers, in the person of a lance-corporal (in private life a broker in the rubber market, I believe), who is a most amusing " drawing-room entertainer " after the style of the late George Grossmith; a transport sergeant (he forsook the law for the war), who has an extensive repertory of Kip-

ling recitations; and a sergeant-instructor of machine-guns, who is the perfect accompanist and a really first-class musician to boot.

These Territorial battalions are full of experts. The beautifully finished sign-posts in Plug Street Wood are the work of Territorials, and a familiar landmark in this historic part of the line is the exquisite little cemetery laid out by a famous Southern Territorial battalion in a pretty little wooded glade, where the gallant Lieutenant Poulton Palmer, the international Rugby footballer, lies. The Adjutant of a certain Territorial battalion of the Leicesters is a quarry manager in civil life. When last I saw him, at tea in a Flemish farm-house, he was proposing to utilize his expert knowledge of pumps for the benefit of his battalion's section of trenches.

In the field I have seen Territorials from England, Scotland and Wales—raw troops fresh from home and hardened veterans of half a dozen fights, bank clerks from Cornhill, miners from Cardiff, gillies from Inverness-shire, ploughboys from the Mendips. I have seen them in rain and shine, in the fire-trenches and behind the lines. And seeing them I have marvelled at the equalizing influence of war that has moulded all these men, torn from their civilian callings—as widely differing as the poles are asunder—to the same stamp of cool, courageous fighters who will endure to the end.

The homogeneity of these Territorial battalions, even of the Divisions, is remarkable. One day I met the whole of the London Division together on the occasion of Divisional sports. The big field in

which the meeting was held was the microcosm of London life. It was London in Picardy. Every London accent was heard in that crowd—the whole gamut of dialects—from the mannered speech of Berkeley Square through all the intonations and inflexions of the suburbs from Highbury to Brixton, and from Shepherd's Bush to Streatham, down to the strident tones of the New Cut and the Old Kent Road. It was strange to think that but a short year since all these men had travelled together in 'bus and tube, had rubbed elbows in Oxford Street or the Strand, strangers all, leading the jealously guarded individual existence of the average Londoner—to think that they were now thrown together into almost the closest relationship it is possible to conceive, the life of troops fighting side by side in the field.

With the Scottish battalions the family spirit is even more marked. The Scotsman is a far more clannish creature than the Southerner, and these Scottish battalions hang together with a fierce *esprit de corps* in which the Englishman feels positively lost. This is especially true of the kilted battalions, which have in their bonnets and kilts a perpetual reminder of their origin.

I have been in the trenches with Highland battalions in which hardly a man born south of the Tweed was serving, and in which all, officers as well as men, spoke in the broadest Scottish vernacular. The chaplains of some of these Scottish Territorial regiments are delightful characters, fine types of "meenister" and "verra' godly men," but, for all

that, stout, great-hearted fellows who are continually with the men in the front line. The fine, practical spirit in which these Scottish *padres* carry out their mission is expressed in the saying of one of their number, Chaplain to the 5th Gordon Highlanders, whose continual exhortation to the men is: "Keep your hearts up and your heads doon!"

With these brave words, which might well serve as a motto for the Territorial on active service, we will leave the Territorials at the post of duty. When the country's need of men was sorest, they volunteered for foreign service and came to France and did their part. Now that the first great transports have crossed the Channel with the men of the New Army, the original mission of the Territorials may be regarded as accomplished, though, doubtless, many fights still await them. They gave their help at a time when every man was wanted to hold our fragile line. Now they have become absorbed into the framework of our army in the field, which the legions of the New Army are expanding into the great Continental host to decide the ultimate issue with the hordes of Germany.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EYES OF THE ARMY

"Why, all my life I have been trying to guess what lay on the other side of the hill!"—THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

ONE day, while I was gazing at a German working-party grubbing like ants on a far slope behind the enemy lines, a hawk glided swiftly and strongly into the field of my telescope. It hung almost motionless in the clear summer air, high up above the green valley, its powerful wings outspread, the very incarnation of waking watchfulness. And I found myself wondering of what the hawk reminded me, poised aloft, now swooping a little this way, now that, until a low droning in the azure far above gave me my clue even as an aeroplane glittered into sight.

The aeroplane stood out, almost motionless as it seemed to me, over the German lines, while with a "pom-pom-pom!" the German anti-aircraft guns ringed it round in puffs of white smoke. Like the hawk that continued to hover over the valley, it was watching—watching. Like the hawk's, its searching glance plunged down into the animate life far below, the life that pursues its normal round unperturbed because it knows it cannot escape from the eyes in the sky.

The aeroplanes are the eyes of the army. They alone have made possible the war of positions. From the Alps to the North Sea the warring nations of Europe are hidden in the ground, but their eyes are far aloft. It is the alliance between the mole and the hawk. While the man in the trench uses the periscope to observe from his safe shelter the enemy trench across the way, the army commanders in the rear peer through the eyes of the aeroplanes into the enemy trenches and into the enemy country far behind the firing-line.

The most important contribution which this war is destined to make to our knowledge of warfare lies in the development of the use of military aircraft. The aeroplane has revolutionized warfare, because it has practically removed from war the element of surprise. The only hope that the modern General has of maintaining the fog of war lies in the weather, which, in more than one instance in this war, has effectually veiled from peering eyes aloft movements which are destined to have a decisive influence on the operations.

The aeroplane has relieved the cavalry of the greater part of its functions. If our cavalry are serving dismounted in the trenches, and their horses growing round of belly, it is the fault of the aeroplane. Sir John French has defined the functions of cavalry as threefold: to reconnoitre, to deceive, to support. The aeroplane has entirely usurped the first of these three rôles, and has rendered the second illusory. Only rain and mist can safely hope to obscure the movements of an army from the eyes of the watcher in the skies.

Like cavalry, the military aeroplanes execute both tactical and strategical reconnaissances. Their tactical reconnaissances are carried out on shorter flights, which lead them out over the enemy trench-lines and the region immediately behind. Their object is to note any change in the clear-cut line of the trenches, as seen from above, indicative of the laying out of fresh fortifications or communication trenches; to look out for reliefs coming up; and, generally, to gauge the strength and composition of the enemy forces along a definite section of the front by noting the positions of transport columns and by locating the whereabouts of brigade and divisional headquarters.

Generally the aeroplane has a specific mission, though, of course, roving flights are also made. A flight may be undertaken at the request of a battalion in the front line which has observed suspicious activity on the part of the enemy opposite, or the Intelligence may have got wind of some move which seems to require further elucidation by a peep from above.

Of the same nature as these tactical reconnaissances are the flights undertaken in collaboration with the artillery, either to survey likely objectives for our guns, to locate hostile batteries that have been annoying our lines, or to perform that useful duty known as "spotting for the guns"—*i.e.*, observing the effect of our artillery fire. Naturally, in the course of flights undertaken for purposes unconnected with our artillery, an aeroplane will often make observations of the greatest value to the guns. In

such cases, of course, a report is immediately made to the artillery headquarters.

As in these tactical reconnaissances the aeroplane is, so to speak, an extended and movable periscope for the men in the front line, so, in its strategical reconnaissance work, it may be said to serve as eyes to the General Staff. Strategical reconnaissance takes the aeroplane on longer flights far into the enemy's country, where above towns in the war zone, about barracks and railheads and headquarters and fortifications, keen eyes may glean much that is of supreme importance to the General Staff in compiling the information as to the strength and dispositions of the enemy on which all strategy is based.

In addition to the tactical and strategical importance of the aeroplane in war, it is also a weapon not only of offence, but of defence, against aircraft. It can carry out bombing raids on fortified positions, factories of munitions of war, aviation centres, railway-stations, barracks, bivouacs, and batteries. It is the only really effective weapon of defence against aircraft, both aeroplanes and airships. One of the principal duties of our aeroplanes at the front is to go up and chase away German aircraft reconnoitring or bound on bombing exploits. They have also done useful work as sky sentries on the watch for the Zeppelins which from time to time sally forth—with small success, be it said—to spread German *Kultur* from the clouds over the towns situated in our zone of operations at the front.

The battle of Neuve Chapelle may be cited as a typical instance of the work which the Royal Flying

Corps is doing in this war. It was our airmen who, by continual reconnaissance work in all the variations of weather which are found in the late winter of Flanders, ascertained the dispositions of the Germans about Neuve Chapelle to be such as to justify the hope that we might risk a successful offensive at this point. It was they who, while our troops were massing for the attack, made sure that all was quiet, not only in the German lines, but also in the enemy's country, far back into Belgium. It was they who, by hovering constantly above our trenches, kept prying German eyes away, and prevented them from discovering the surprise which was preparing for Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria and his merry men.

Nor did the usefulness of the Royal Flying Corps cease here. Despite the very hazy weather which prevailed on the morning of the engagement (March 10), "a remarkable number of hours' flying of a most valuable character were effected, and continuous and close reconnaissance was maintained over the enemy's front" (Sir John French's Despatch, dated General Headquarters, April 5, 1915).

During the actual fighting, in addition to their usual work of "spotting for the guns," our aeroplanes executed several daring raids into Belgium, in order to hamper the enemy's movements by destroying his points of communication. Bombs were dropped on the railways at Menin, Courtrai, Don, and Douai; a wireless installation near Lille is believed to have been destroyed; while, to quote the official despatch again, "a house in which the

enemy had installed one of his headquarters was set on fire."

This was, I believe, the headquarters of the German Intelligence, for I read in the German newspapers that the rooms in which the German Intelligence at General Headquarters is installed are boarded up along one side as the result of the partial destruction of the house by an English air raid. It was also stated that one of the English bombs which had not exploded is kept on the mantelpiece in the office as a memento.

A Belgian doctor who called upon me in London in April, immediately on his arrival from Belgium, told me of a dramatic account of the British air raid on the railway at Courtrai, given to him by the guard of a train which had been standing in the station at the time. The man had been wounded, and my Belgian friend had been called in to attend him. The guard said that, on the appearance of the British aeroplane over the station, a number of German soldiers rushed out on to the line and started to fire at the raider with their rifles. The British airman suddenly planed down, and the Germans, thinking he had been hit, streamed together with shouts of joy into a dense crowd to await his landing.

But their triumph was short-lived. When he was not more than a hundred feet from the ground the raider dropped four bombs in rapid succession right into the midst of the crowd; then, with a quick jerk of his elevating plane, soared aloft and away. The bombs worked havoc among that dense mass. A score or more of soldiers and railwaymen were

killed, and as many more wounded. The train was wrecked; and as for the guard, who was a German, the doctor said he became positively panic-stricken at the mere thought of what he had seen that day.

The development which the war has produced in what I may call air tactics is positively prodigious. It must be remembered that, at the outset, the aeroplane had practically never been tried on active service, for the experiments made in the Tripoli and Balkan wars, and by the French in Morocco, were more in the nature of sporting flights than serious military tests. Our pilots have had to learn by their own experience in the air—and a gallant and bravely bought experience it has been—the fighting tactics of the aeroplane. They have had to learn to distinguish "by silhouette" the different types of German machine, and to discover the most efficacious way of dealing with each one, according as the position of the propeller and of the driving-seat in relation to the planes restricts the field of fire of the enemy machine-gun. They have had to learn for themselves how to manœuvre for position when tackling an adversary in the air, to find out the vital spots in the different types of enemy machines.

Active service has brought them their first taste of flying under fire. They have learnt to keep a cool head with high-explosive shrapnel from the enemy "Archies" bursting all around them, and bullets from the machine-guns of attacking aeroplanes whistling about their ears or rustling through the canvas stretches of their wings. They have learnt to make those twists and turns, those swoops and dives,

which I have so often seen them making high in the air above the lines, to avoid those pretty little puffs which carry instant destruction in their folds of white smoke.

Just as a certain temper of nerve is required of the airman, so must he also possess special faculties of observation to fit him for military work. The air observer must be cool-headed and resolute. Above all things he must possess a certain measure of intuition which will complete, which will fill in the details, as it were, of the picture which his sharp eyes must pick out in relief from the blurred chessboard of fields and roads and trees far beneath him.

Only experience will teach even the keenest eye to observe fruitfully. Only the trained eye, reinforced by a good military brain, will detect in that black thread on a white strip troops marching along a road, or distinguish a moving train in that white smudge gliding over a dark background. Only the trained mind will appreciate the military significance of these observations. Where the intuition comes in is in making the correct deductions from the things observed, and fitting them into their right place in the general scheme of our information of the enemy's movements. Intelligent map-reading at the height at which aeroplanes in war are compelled to travel is more than an acquired accomplishment; it is a born gift.

Where a pilot and an observer venture forth together in one machine, they must work in closest harmony. Like bowler and wicket-keeper in one of those successful combinations with which we are

familiar in county cricket, each must divine by intuition the intention of the other. In the roar of the propeller, the rush of the hurricane, communication by word of mouth is hopeless, and even the portable telephone is of small avail.

Now the observer is the captain on the bridge, the pilot the chief engineer in the engine-room. Now the rôles are reversed. Destruction threatens, and the pilot takes command. The observer can lean back and commend his soul to God, while his comrade strains every nerve to avert a swift end by a bullet in the air or a more terrible death on the cruel earth a mile below.

Though only two years old, the Royal Flying Corps has already created its own distinctive atmosphere. I can only describe it as a subtle blend of the free-and-easy good-fellowship of the navy with the kind of hectic dare-devilry which is characteristic of airmen everywhere.

Not that the foolhardiness of a certain type of airman that we all know is tolerated in the Royal Flying Corps. Its spirit demands high courage, cool nerve, and absolute devotion to duty, on the part of every one of its men, but feats of the "looping the loop" order are strictly repressed. It is to keep this spirit out of the Corps that the rule has been made forbidding any "advertising" of individual airmen by name in connection with their flights on military service.

The risks are the same for all airmen at the front. Every airman that fares forth over the German lines takes his life in his hand. The authorities who

decide these things hold—and rightly hold, in my opinion—that the "writing-up" of the feats of individuals on duty might introduce into the Corps a spirit of rivalry which is not consonant with our high military traditions, and would also be unfair to those airmen who weekly fly hundreds of miles in accomplishment of difficult and dangerous missions, but who, by chance or by their own skill and judgment, avoid adventures that savour of the sensational. Therefore, "no names, no courts-martial."

This rule has often rankled in my journalistic heart, for the Royal Flying Corps accomplishes almost daily feats which appeal to all that is daring and adventurous in Englishmen. Let us hope that after the war the war diary of the Royal Flying Corps will be made public. It should prove as inspiring a record of gallantry as the story of the Scott Expedition.

Let me remind you, as a foretaste of the deeds of epic heroism this diary contains, of the achievements of three young men of the Royal Flying Corps, all of whom have made the sacrifice of their lives—Rhodes-Moorhouse, V.C., Mapplebeck, D.S.O., and Aidan Liddell, V.C.

England was thrilled to the depths when it read the plain, unvarnished tale told by "Eyewitness" of the last flight and death of Rhodes-Moorhouse. You remember how, landing at the flying-ground with a mortal wound, he had but one thought, not of himself, but of his mission—to make his report before they bore him away to die. Those who were present when he returned from his last flight repeated

to me the grim jest he made about the horrifying wound he had received. Though his body was hurt beyond repair, the courage in that brave soul burned so brightly that it gave him strength to fulfil his duty to the last. And so his epitaph ran: "He made his report."

I have heard nothing more extraordinary or more gallant than the Odyssey of young Lieutenant Mapplebeck, who, after emerging safe and sound from one of the most adventurous episodes of the war, met his death in a banal flying accident in England. Young Mapplebeck's adventure began when, in the course of a reconnaissance over the enemy lines, he was shot down over a town in German occupation. He managed to land in a field, and, finding to his amazement that his enforced descent had not been observed, promptly concealed himself.

Mapplebeck spoke French, Flemish, and German, with equal fluency, and this gift of tongues, coupled with a nice mixture of resourcefulness and audacity, helped him to a suit of civilian clothes, in which he proceeded to take a look round the town. The walls were covered with placards announcing that his abandoned aeroplane had been found, and threatening dire reprisals against whomsoever should contumaciously venture to harbour him. This did not deter the adventurous young man from mixing freely with the German soldiers. He drank beer with them, and listened—with what silent amusement may be divined—to their bewildered speculations as to the whereabouts of the vanished *Engländer*.

He actually managed to change some money, bringing home in proof of his feat German banknotes stamped with that historic phrase, "*Gott strafe England!*" and probably circulated, in the territories occupied by Germany, with a view to producing a "moral effect" on the unfortunate civilian population.

As the result of an accident the hero of my tale had one foot shorter than the other. But he did not allow this physical deformity to interfere with his subsequent course of action. He concluded his extraordinary adventure by walking right through the German lines, through Belgium into Holland, doing an average of thirty miles on foot a day. To prevent his passage being traced, he took the precaution of changing his nationality, speech, and story, with everybody with whom he came in contact. He, too, "made his report." Though it was late by several weeks, it was a good deal more ample and informative than had ever been anticipated when he set out. Within a month of his adventure, Mapplebeck was flying at the front again.

Captain Aidan Liddell died in hospital in August, after a magnificent feat of endurance which was described to me by his comrades of the R.F.C. at the time. While he was reconnoitring over the German lines in Belgium one day at the beginning of August, his leg was almost severed by a German shell which burst right above his machine. Liddell, who was driving, immediately lost consciousness, and the machine, with pilot and observer, dived nose foremost towards the earth.

The aeroplane was flying at a very great height when the accident happened. It turned right over on itself as it hurtled down, but, owing to its great altitude from the ground, had time to right itself. On being wounded, Liddell had collapsed over the steering-wheel, with his arms round the pillar. This position kept him in his seat when the machine turned turtle. The observer was jammed hard between the machine-gun and the struts, and was thus likewise prevented from falling out.

As the machine righted itself, the pilot regained consciousness. Now they were dangerously near the earth, but, recognizing that with his wound he could not last very long, Liddell turned the machine for home. He made off in a straight line for the nearest flying-ground, which happened to be Belgian. With fifty wounds, as it subsequently appeared, in his leg, faint from loss of blood, he flew for thirty-five minutes, and finally reached the aerodrome, where he made a perfect landing. To those who ran out to greet him he said very steadily: "You must lift me out. If I move I'm afraid my leg will come off."

When they told me his story there was every chance that the gallant pilot would save his leg, nor did his life seem seriously endangered. But amputation proved necessary, and Liddell did not survive the operation. The Victoria Cross laid upon his coffin was the worthy recompense of his deathless endurance.

Those are three little stories of the Royal Flying Corps. I can think of no higher praise than to say

that they are typical of the spirit of our airmen at the front.

There is a freemasonry of the air. Some kind of affinity seems to exist between those who have taken to themselves wings to explore the vastnesses of space. It has survived the snapping of all the other ties that once united us with our present foe. German airmen who rejoice in the slaughter of civilians from the skies show themselves of punctilious chivalry towards their foeman in space. If a British aeroplane goes forth and does not return, it often happens that a message is thrown down in our lines by a German aeroplane announcing the fate of the missing. The Royal Flying Corps, on its side, is equally courteous. There is no place left for chivalry between foemen on earth, it seems, so they have banished it to the skies.

I always think there is an heroic atmosphere about the flying-grounds at the front. It is the privilege of these green fields and gorse-grown heaths, with their fringe of sheds, to witness the finish of these epic adventures in the air. Out of the crystal clearness of the summer evening, from the drifting cloud-wrack of a stormy day, the aeroplanes drone home, laden with their cargoes of glorious deeds. I have seen the airmen go out at dawn. I have seen them return in the sunset. Indeed, where the war correspondents have their headquarters the sky throbs all day with the song of the propellers.

There is a great deal of efficiency and bustle about these flying-grounds at the front. Through the doors flung wide of the hangars lining the ground one gets

a glimpse of the fighting aeroplanes, strangely big and cumbrous on the ground as contrasted with their power and beauty in the air. Little knots of mechanics in blue overalls, the natty forage-cap of the R.F.C. poised on one side of the head, swarm about the machines, busied with the engine, changing parts, tightening up wires.

All these flying-grounds at the front are self-contained. The motor-lorries of the Wing stationed there line one side of the aerodrome when they are not away at the railheads fetching stores and supplies. The hum of the lathe, the clink of tools, resound from the travelling workshops by the roadside as from the repair shops installed in sheds and barns about the place. There is a constant droning in the air, faint and soothing like the hum of a bee, from somewhere far aloft where an airman is executing graceful curves on a testing flight, loud and deafening about the sheds where the engines are having their trial runs.

Here is an aeroplane starting off on reconnaissance. Pilot and observer are already in their seats in the midst of a neat arrangement of maps on rollers, compass, barograph, speedometer, pressure gauges, clock, camera, and machine-gun. The biplane, big but frail, its planes shining diaphanously, its metal-work sparkling in the sun, quivers and trembles to the stroke of the roaring propeller. An officer wearing the characteristic cross-buttoned tunic of the R.F.C. is making a parting recommendation to the pilot, who, in his fur-lined leather hood and leather coat and fur gloves, looks more like an Arctic explorer

than anything else. The observer, similarly muffled up, is fixing a map in position.

The biplane is standing out in the middle of the field, its nose pointed in the opposite direction from the firing-line, for the airmen will only bring their machine into the wind after they are in the air. The roar of the engine grows suddenly louder as the officer, his injunctions at an end, steps clear, and the biplane slides away over the ground with that curious bobbing motion that one knows. It takes the air easily, steadily, and clambers aloft round and round the aerodrome, then suddenly turns sharply aside and makes off towards the firing-line, twenty miles away.

Not a day passes that one does not see our aeroplanes bound for the front. How often have I stood in the fire-trench and watched one of these aerial reconnaissances—seen our airman, so high that he looked like a tiny moth in a vast domed hall, stealing out over the German lines! Again and again the enemy anti-aircraft guns drive him back, but each time he comes back and each time he sees a little more.

Sometimes, as I have watched, I have seen another aeroplane suddenly materialize out of the blue and circle in sweeps about the invader. The " Archies " cease fire. From somewhere very far away, as it seems, echoes the dull tap-tapping of a machine-gun. Suddenly you realize that it is a fight in the air, that you are watching the fantasy of Wells translated into reality. Honestly, it is not very thrilling. You hear that very faint barking of the guns:

all you see is two tiny shining specks manœuvring in the air. The only men who get a good view of the fight are the combatants engaged.

But, as so often happens, imagination breathes life into the dead bones of reality. As you watch those translucent dots curvetting a mile above your head, you find yourself thinking of the greensward of the busy aerodrome awaiting the return of the aerial scout, even now at grips in the air, of his place at the dinner-table, of the pleasant château where the Flying Corps has its mess, of the comrades who even now, maybe, are scanning the sky towards where the battle front is stretched, for a sign of the missing bird. I have seen these anxious little groups at nightfall waiting on the open flying-ground for those who have not come back, and great fires throwing out a ruddy light to guide the wanderer home.

The Germans have the most wholesome respect for the efficiency of the Royal Flying Corps. It has found tangible expression in the efforts they have made to produce a type of machine faster and more powerful than anything our airmen possess. The German battle aeroplane, a most formidable machine with double fuselage, made its appearance this summer, and proved itself to be the fastest aeroplane in the field. Engine-power will almost always get the better of skill and courage. Once again the Germans, by calling in their unrivalled technical knowledge to their aid, diminished the advantage we had gained over them in equal contest. We lost no time in taking up the challenge, and there are signs that the Germans will not be left

long in enjoyment of their monopoly of speed in aerial reconnaissance.

The Germans have proved themselves to be skilful and adventurous fliers in this war. It is characteristic of the thoroughness of their war training that at the very outset of the war they gave proof of possessing a more or less definite plan of campaign for the war in the air. But—probably on superior orders—they do not show that lust for fighting that distinguishes our airmen. Our fliers are always lamenting the fact that a German airman will never wait to engage an adversary who sallies out to drive him off, but turns tail and runs as soon as the enemy appears.

The time has not yet come to review the work of the Royal Flying Corps at the front. I have made no attempt to do so in this chapter. The aeroplane is such an essential part of the Intelligence in modern war that no detailed survey of the methods by which the Royal Flying Corps fulfils its functions as the eyes of the army can safely be given until the war is over. I have had to content myself, therefore, with seeking to impart to you at home some of the admiration with which the gallantry and endurance of our airmen in the field have inspired me, who have been privileged to see them at their work.

"Ruin-kist but gamesome ever,
Proud we meet amid the blue:
Who shall speed the world's endeavour,
Splendid foeman, I or you?
Here we crash: the great downcasting
Waits. May weal us all betide!
Buoyant with the Everlasting
Lords of death we ride—we ride!"

J. MACKERETH: *Hymn of the Airman.*

CHAPTER XVII

ENTER THE NEW ARMY

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."—ECCLES. I. 9.

THE public at large first heard of the arrival of the New Army at the front through the Commander-in-Chief's Despatch, published on July 12, covering the second battle of Ypres and the military operations down to the end of May. In that Despatch Sir John French announced that, since the date of his last report, several divisions of the New Army had arrived in France, and added that their physique was excellent, and that their bearing and appearance on parade reflected great credit on the officers and staffs responsible for their training.

But there were many homes in England in which this carefully guarded secret had long been known—in fact, ever since the sinister spectre of the war had crept into the house on the sudden departure of husband, son, or brother for the port of embarkation. Imagination, quickly stirred by love, pictured the young soldier landed in post-haste in France, and forthwith marched into the trenches—into battle.

I met one of the first divisions of the New Army to come out to France within a few days of its landing. I fell in with it, indeed, at the end of its very first march towards the front from the railhead, where it had detrained on its journey up from the coast base. One of its battalions came into the little village where the war correspondents had their camp.

It was a picture that will not soon fade from my memory, the files of wet and mud-stained Highlanders tramping in through the gathering twilight, their baggage-carts and field-kitchens rumbling along behind. Their transport seemed strangely spick-and-span under its layer of yellow splashings from the road, and then, reading on the side of a cart the inscription, giving number and name of the battalion, I realized with a thrill that this was the New Army.

With what fresh interest I looked at those men again! The smiles and tears of a thousand homes seemed to wreathe themselves about those fine stalwart figures. If these bonny Highlanders did not each carry a Marshal's baton in his haversack, then, at least, they bore there the hopes and pride of England. For, say what you will, the New Army occupies a place of its own in the nation's thoughts. Regulars and Territorials both have their warm corners in the national heart, but the New Army—it is you, it is I, it is all of us. It is a child of the war, born since we broke with our old peaceful past, born of the new spirit of self-sacrifice and determination that is remaking a nation under our very eyes. The thought that is uppermost on seeing

the New Army in the field is that these are the men who must complete what has been begun, the men that must carry on the torch so long and so bravely upheld by the Old Army.

That battalion was quartered in the village for a few days. That very evening, and each evening during its stay, their pipers strode once up and once down the village street, playing the time-hallowed tattoo. After nightfall the men quartered in the barns and sheds all around chased dull care away by impromptu concerts. The rousing choruses—veritable symposia of all the music-hall successes of the past two years—mingling with the strains of mouth-organs, evoked memories which were positively poignant in our isolation at the front of tired crowds streaming back into London on hot Bank Holiday nights in summer. For a few days one caught a glimpse of the kilt in the village, one heard now and then the skirl of the pipes, and then, one morning at daybreak, the battalion moved on.

After that, I continually came across the New Army at the front. I seemed to be following, stage by stage, its progressive acclimatization to the new life, its training for the new work. More than once I encountered an entire division on the march between towns in rear of our lines. The men's uniform seemed to be of a more homogeneous khaki tint than that of the veteran battalions in the field, and I was particularly struck by the excellent leather harness and the splendid condition of the big shire horses of the transport.

Little by little the New Army was creeping towards

the front. Now I would meet one of its officers doing a spell in the trenches, now a company trudging with full equipment towards the firing-line along some Flanders road, whose forlorn appearance spoke of "frightfulness" past and to come. In the same way as the Territorials, the New Army was gradually familiarized with the conditions in the trenches, until a whole division was deemed suitably prepared for holding its part of the line alongside of Regular and Territorial troops.

Like the Commander in-Chief, everybody in the field was impressed by the remarkably fine physique of the men of the New Army. Their appearance fully dispelled an idea that was current at one time, not only in England but also at the front, that the first of the New Armies would be made up of poor specimens of the nation's manhood—that wastage in the form of the permanently unemployed and the casual labourers, who are always the first to be hit by an economic disturbance such as war produces. The splendid proportions of the men in many new battalions, not only in stature but also in muscular development, suggested that these men were ideal fighters, whatever their training might prove to be like. This impression was amply confirmed by the easy poise of the head and the clear expression of the eyes of the men of the New Army.

Said the General commanding one of the first divisions of the New Army to come to France, in talking to me about his men :

"I don't believe they have a nerve in their bodies. They are magnificent men in spirit as in physique.

All they want now is to ' have a go ' at the Germans, and once they get going, there will be no holding them back, I give you my word for that. I have never seen the Territorial system to better advantage than in the New Armies. In almost every battalion the men come from their own recruiting area, and, in addition to the bond of a common dialect, have all kinds of family, business, and social relations with their officers and with one another. Their discipline is excellent, and they are taking to the new conditions of life out here like a duck to water."

One who is in a position to judge adumbrated to me the theory that the men of the later classes of the New Armies—men who joined for "conscience' sake," after taking a month or two to settle up their affairs—would be more "intelligent" soldiers, more to be trusted individually and in a sudden emergency, but less good with the bayonet and the spade than the earlier classes.

I believe this to be the veriest hair-splitting. Experience has shown, I think, that war, or at any rate this war, gives a uniform mentality to all men who are drawn into it, and they become good or bad soldiers as the case may be. I am convinced that there is not a pin to choose between a good Regular battalion and a good Territorial battalion, even if the latter, like so many of the London Territorial regiments, for example, is in the main composed of men from the educated classes.

The entrance of the New Army upon the stage of the theatre of war marks the passing of the old soldier, the man who put the battle honours on the

regimental colours. He has left his magnificent spirit of courage, devotion, and endurance behind, but he is taking away with him many of his whimsical ways as expressed in his mysterious army slang, his curious army games, his love of sentimental ditties of the "Just before the Battle, Mother" order, or of doggerel like "Cock Robin" and "The Song of Shame."

Already you may find trenches at the front where an allusion to the Motherland as "Old Blighty," to bread as "roti," and jam as "pozzy," will meet eyebrows lifted in haughty amazement, where "Crown and Anchor" * is never played, where that cry, so familiar to army ears, of "'Ouse!" † is never heard.

You remember the apoplectic horror of the old Colonel in the story because a private of Regulars on parade blew his nose on his handkerchief, "like any damned militiaman." What would the old gentleman say, I wonder, to privates who go into action with a pocket edition of Ruskin in their haversacks and a couple of *Times Broadsheets* in their breast-pockets?

However, the long-service man is by no means

* "Crown and Anchor"—a soldier's game of chance played with a pointer which is spun round a board marked out in fields of different colour on which the players stake. Stakes are paid according to the field at which the pointer stops. This and "'Ouse" (see following footnote) are great games among Regulars at the front. They are, or used to be, extensively played on troop transports homeward bound from India. Quite considerable sums of money are said to change hands at "Crown and Anchor" on these transports.

† "House"—a kind of lotto, played with numbered cards, mostly for copper stakes.

wholly extinct in the army in the field, and in many battalions his influence lingers strong. In battalions of the New Army it is maintained by old soldiers who have re-enlisted for the duration of the war, and upon whom, with their tales of service in Malta, Gibraltar, Aden, Egypt, and India, their comrades, fresh from civil life, seek to mould themselves. But for all that, the soldier of Kipling's stories is disappearing from the army as the fighting unit, mainly because his numbers are gradually becoming extinct through wastage of war, but also because the character of the army is changing.

Under the influence of the introduction of so much new blood, the army has ceased to be the close corporation it was, the kind of exclusive association that, by its terms of service nd its small numbers, was able to select its material and shape it to its own form. It has become more universal in character, more identified with the nation at large. I believe that the change is only temporary, and that, as far as one may look into the future at the present juncture, our military traditions are strong enough to mould any amount of new material into the old form; moreover, the men of the Expeditionary Force, now prisoners in Germany, will alone suffice to furnish the backbone of a new army on the old lines after the war. The introduction of conscription would, of course, sound the knell of the army as we knew it in the past.

The regimental officer of the type that Sandhurst and Woolwich turned out is gradually being replaced by the subaltern from civil life. In the new condi-

tions, it will be impossible, I imagine, to maintain to the full the old atmosphere of our officers' corps, in which patriotism and pride of regiment were rivals in the affections. The subaltern of the New Army no longer talks of his regiment by its old army number, nor does he recognize in the men around him those little symbols that express our great military past, the red heckle of the Black Watch, the Sussex plume, the eagle of the Scots Greys, nor could he tell you why the officers of the Royal West Kents drink the King's health sitting, and the Grenadier Guards not at all.

We are here confronted with the introduction of an entirely new type into the army. In the boys fresh from a Public School and in the 'Varsity graduates the army draws on a class that has always supplied a large proportion of officers, but in addition to these there is found in the New Army the vague young man—*le petit jeune homme* that Tristan Bernard writes of so delightfully—who has never done anything particular until his response to the call of duty pitched him into a period of intensive training among men to whom the army and its great traditions meant as little as to himself.

Service in the field will make or mar this type of officer which is found so largely in the New Army. In his training-camp at home he has probably already dimly discerned that upon him, as an officer, devolves the enormous responsibility of "mothering" a large number of men, all of whom are older and more experienced in life than he. But he will scarcely realize how much he is on his trial, that

he must " make good " or go under, until he comes out to the front. In the field he will learn that his neat uniform and his Sam Browne belt are something more than mere sartorial embellishments which are *de rigueur* in England this year. He will soon find out that the honour attaching not to him but to the coat he wears carries with it obligations which he must meet unflinchingly or be crushed.

In the field he will understand the true inwardness of those regulations, continually impressed upon him at home by senior officers, whom he was disposed to regard as " fussy " and " red-tapey," which lay down a clear social distinction between the officer and his men. He must find out for himself how to adjust those regulations with that measure of good-fellowship which, if he keeps his eyes open, he will see existing between officers and men already at the front. Presently he will begin to comprehend that the leader must be different from his men, that the men must look up to him as to a real " superior," for guidance, for moral support. Then, when he begins to realize that it largely depends on himself whether his men are good or bad, he will take his place as a tiny cog in the position allocated to him by the army in its vast system of machinery.

But even should it prove impossible to maintain the old atmosphere of our officers' corps, the new atmosphere will, I believe, be impregnated with the same ideals as the old, though their origin may be different. Our present army, composed of veterans of the Expeditionary Force, Territorials, and New Army men, is inspired by the same determination

to prevail as held our little army firm at Mons and Ypres. In the case of the Expeditionary Force, probably military tradition, which has all the force of habit, was the main source from which this rare tenacity was fed; with the New Army this unanimous resolve to conquer or die springs from a blending of our great military traditions with the mighty uplifting of our British civilization against a tyranny in which liberty cannot live. Therefore I think one need not be apprehensive lest the change which is coming over the character of the British Army should detract from its fighting worth. Our military traditions will see to it that discipline remains unimpaired: our resolve as a nation to see this thing through will inspire our new troops to model themselves on the glorious example of the men who have gone before.

The men in the field were glad to welcome the New Army. Already the young troops have sustained their baptism of fire, not only in the trenches but also in the open field. Obviously, not only officers and men, but also the staffs, are lacking in experience of trench warfare. Their immediate usefulness would rather seem to lie in the assault, but, pending a resumption of the offensive by the Allies on the Western front, every day the New Army spends in the field adds to its knowledge of the peculiar conditions of the war of positions.

The future is to the New Army. Their arrival in the field betokens the end of the era of insufficient men and resources. It ushers in the day when the Allies, with all the force that in them dwells, shall

essay to break the wall of steel which Germany has flung across Europe. In a dawn as full of promise as that which saw the rising of the sun of Austerlitz, the young levies of Imperial Britain are waiting at the parapet of our trench-line, looking out across the void at the barrier behind which victory lies.

THE END

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